



DEFENSIVE DRIVING FACT SHEET

Traffic-related motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of work-related fatalities in the United States. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, three workers are killed every day—more than a thousand each year—while driving, riding in or working around motor vehicles in traffic. Driver inattention or distraction may occur while you are driving with the radio playing or thinking about all that needs to be done that day when all at once, the car ahead of you has stopped dead in its tracks, which could cause a serious or fatal accident.

Employers should develop and enforce a motor vehicle safety policy if workers are required to operate a motor vehicle while on the job. It is important for employers to stress to employees that when they are driving for work, safe driving is their primary responsibility. A motor vehicle safety policy should be made part of every safety program.

Who is at risk of exposure to accidents while on the job?

While all drivers are at risk, certain occupations are at greater risk. They are:

- Truck drivers
- Utility providers
- Deliverers
- Salespeople

By occupation, the largest number of vehicle deaths occurs among truck drivers; however, every worker whose job duties include operating a motor vehicle is at risk.

What can I do to protect myself?

General Precautions:

- Do not drive at an illegal or unsafe speed (there are minimum speeds on Interstates).
- Yield the right of way when merging into traffic.
- Avoid aggressive driving; do not follow too closely or swerve in and out of traffic.
- Avoid driving when fatigued.
- Pay attention to traffic control devices such as stop signs and traffic lights.
- Be attentive to traffic patterns and reduced speed limits in designated work zones.
- Reduce speed and move over a lane, when possible, when law enforcement or other emergency vehicles are on the roadway.

- Be aware of individuals on the roadway directing or flagging traffic.
- Do not drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs (including prescribed medication).
- Wear a seatbelt.
- Stop and take a break on long trips.

Off-Road Vehicles:

- Do not drive a vehicle in reverse gear when the rear view is obstructed unless the vehicle has an audible reverse alarm distinguishable from surrounding noise levels or another worker signals that it is safe.
- Make sure employees are trained before operating equipment.
- Drive vehicles or equipment only on roadways or grades that are safely constructed or maintained to eliminate overturned vehicles.

Tips for Employers:

- Create clear, comprehensive and enforceable workplace driving safety policies.
- Discuss established policies with employees.
- Perform motor vehicle record checks.
- Review the program to determine whether the objectives are met and adjust the program where improvements are needed.
- Discuss the program review and changes with employees.

Are there occupational safety and health standards for defensive driving?

There are no specific NCDOL OSH Division standards that apply directly to driver safety. Additionally, vehicle accidents are typically not investigated by the NCDOL OSH Division. However, N.C. General Statute 95-129(1), commonly referred to as the General Duty Clause, may be applied for recognized hazards not covered by a specific NCDOL standard.

Where can I find additional information about defensive driving?

The NCDOL OSH Division developed a series of six brochures titled Project Drive Safe. To review these, please see our [brochures](#) under publications on the NCDOL Web site.

The [N.C. Safety and Health Council](#) also provides information and training on defensive driving.

OSHA also provides [Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes](#).