**Defensive Driving Policy & Procedures**

[COMPANY] is strongly committed to a sound and thorough defensive driving policy.

While operating vehicles, drivers should always drive in the safest manner possible. Specifically, our drivers must operate vehicles in accordance with all provisions of this policy and obey all traffic laws as well as drive in a safe and prudent manner.

Any employee who is authorized to use any vehicle for company business must successfully complete the Defensive Driving Course.

 1. Assignments for classes shall be made by the employee's supervisor to

 ensure class quotas are met and to maintain satisfactory work schedules.

 2. Frequency of employee attendance of Defensive Driving Courses shall be once per year.

 3. New employees required to drive company vehicles shall be required to complete the

 Defensive Driving Course satisfactorily before starting their driving assignment.

**The core concepts of defensive driving are:**

 • Recognize the hazard.

 • Understand the defense.

 • Act in time.

Vehicle Accident Procedure

**Step** 1: Stop, stay calm

**Step** 2: Turn on your emergency flashers as an immediate warning signal. Then

do a quick evaluation of accident victims, if any, and provide assistance.

Next, set out emergency warning devices on the roadway.

**Step** 3: Either contact local law enforcement personnel and your supervisor yourself or arrange to have someone do it for you. Be courteous and cooperative when providing information to authorities. Never admit guilt or liability at the scene of an accident. Never leave the scene of an accident.

**Step** 4: Write down names, license numbers and other information regarding the accident and those people involved in it. Draw a simple diagram of the accident scene. The more detail you can provide, the better it will be for insurance and/or legal purposes later. If you have a camera for use at the accident scene, document the situation with photographs from various angles.

**Step 5** : After the vehicle has been secured, warning devices put in place, assistance rendered to injured person(s) (if any), and law enforcement personnel contacted, you (the driver) should communicate the accident to your supervisor.

**Step 6** : Complete Vehicle Accident Report Form at the scene of the accident.

Defensive Driving Procedures

**Intersections.** Getting into and out of intersections without an accident is a mark of a good defensive driver. Besides your own skill level, intersections also demand anticipation of the actions of other drivers and taking appropriate evasive action as required.

**Backing.** Backing is an extremely hazardous maneuver. If you are backing with the assistance of a guide, the ultimate responsibility for the safety of the backing maneuver remains with you as the driver.

**Front-End Collisions.** The primary way to avoid front-end collisions is by maintaining a safe and adequate following distance. You should be prepared for possible obstructions on the roadway, either in plain sight or hidden by curves or the crests of hills. A special situation occurs at night, when speed should be kept to a level that will allow you to stop within the distance illuminated by the headlights of your vehicle.

**Rear-End Collisions.** As a driver, you risk being struck from behind if you do not maintain an adequate margin of safety in your own following distance. If enough space is not allowed in front of your vehicle, chances go way up that somebody can (and will) impact you from the rear.

**Passing.** Failure to pass safely indicates faulty judgment on your part as a defensive driver, and failure to consider one or more of the factors that need to be checked:

 • Is there enough room ahead?

 • Is there adequate space to move back into your lane of traffic after passing?

 • Have you signaled your intentions?

**Being Passed.** As a driver, you must be aware of the actions of other drivers, and give way if another driver begins to sideswipe you or to cut you off. A good defensive driver will avoid problems with this kind of accident situation.

**Encroaching on Other Traffic Lanes.** Observant defensive drivers will not usually get trapped when other drivers change lanes abruptly. In the same manner, entrapment in merging traffic can be successfully avoided by a good defensive driver with a little preplanning and willingness to yield. Blind spots are not valid excuses for this kind of accident – allowances must be made in areas of limited sight distance.

**Railroad Grade Crossings.** Driving across railroad crossings, or in areas where there are rail vehicles of some sort, demands special care. Careful observance of the traffic situation is your best defense.

**Oncoming Traffic.** A defensive driver will avoid a collision with an oncoming vehicle at all costs. Even if the vehicle enters your lane of traffic, an accident can be avoided with some evasive maneuvers.

**Turning.** Turning, like passing, is a dangerous maneuver, and demands special care and an observant eye from you as a defensive driver. You should be aware of other vehicles in your path, and of the complete configuration of the turn you are about to undertake.

**Pedestrians.** As a sensible defensive driver, always assume that if there is a pedestrian (or small vehicle of some sort) involved in a situation, slowing down is your best defense. Be certain to give people and small vehicles the benefit of the doubt.

**Extreme Weather and Road Conditions.** Bad weather and other road hazards place special stress upon any defensive driver. The best rule in any kind of bad weather or extreme road condition is get off the road safely and as soon as possible. If you absolutely must continue, slowing way down and increasing following distance are your best defenses, along with increased awareness.

**Fog.**  Fog reduces available visibility and impairs distance perception, making it perhaps the most dangerous type of extreme weather condition. Whenever possible, drivers are to avoid driving in extremely foggy conditions. Pull off the road and park safely until such time as the fog dissipates or is burned off, if at all possible. If you cannot safely pull off the road, follow these procedures:

* Never assume the depth or thickness of any fog. Fog can range from a momentary blurring of the windshield to being several miles thick.
* Slow your vehicle's speed. Reduction in speed should be done gradually in order to avoid becoming a hazard for other motorists. Determining a correct and safe speed depends on the thickness of the fog and is left to your best judgment.
* Use low-beam headlights only when driving in fog. Low-beams serve two purposes. They help you see the immediate roadway and also allow other motorists to see your vehicle.
* Avoid the use of high-beam headlights while driving in fog. The water particles that make up fog will reflect more light back at you than onto the roadway when high beams are used, and will further reduce visibility for you.
* Make use of windshield wipers and the defroster when driving in fog. Driving in foggy conditions will cause a constant fine mist of water to develop on the vehicle's windshield, reducing visibility in the process. Using the windshield wipers and defroster will alleviate this condition.
* Avoid passing other vehicles while driving in fog.
* Avoid stopping on any roadway while driving in foggy conditions unless absolutely necessary. If you must stop, use the emergency or breakdown lane, activate your emergency flashers, turn off the headlights.

**Rain.** Rain causes roadways to become slippery, especially when it first begins. Roadways become covered with a thin layer of oil and other residues. When rain mixes with this layer, it results in an extremely slippery and dangerous road surface. This condition remains until additional rain can break down and wash away the oily mixture from the pavement. This process can take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours, depending on the severity of the rain.

Water on the road surface can also create a potential hazard of hydroplaning. Hydroplaning happens when a thin layer of water separates the vehicle's tires from the road surface. When a vehicle is hydroplaning, it is literally riding on water. When the tires ride on water, they lose all traction and create an extremely dangerous situation. The faster a vehicle travels on standing water, the greater the chance of hydroplaning. Reducing speed is the best and safest way to avoid hydroplaning.

Rain also reduces visibility. Because rain presents these hazards, drivers are expected to adhere to the following procedures when driving in rainy conditions:

* Slow the vehicle's speed to avoid hydroplaning. Reduction in speed should be done gradually in order to avoid becoming a hazard for other motorists. Determining the correct and safe speed depends on how heavy the rain is and will be left to your best judgment.
* Increase your following distance from other motorists. Since rain causes the road surface to become slippery, you need to allow for greater stopping distance if the need to stop arises.
* Use windshield wipers and the defroster when driving in rain. Driving in rainy conditions will cause a constant film of water to develop on the vehicle's windshield, reducing visibility in the process. Using the windshield wipers and defroster will alleviate this condition.
* You should avoid passing other vehicles while driving in rain. In addition, you are encouraged to follow other vehicles at a safe distance since vehicles traveling ahead will throw water off the pavement and leave "tracks". Driving in these tracks will give you the best possible traction under rainy conditions.

**Snow.** Snow, depending on the type and severity, can present a variety of dangerous conditions. Because of this, the following procedures have been developed for this defensive driving policy:

* Light, powdery snow presents few problems since it is quickly blown of the road surface. However if there is enough of this type of snow to cover the roadway, it will form a slick, smooth surface. You should reduce speed and increase following distance. Determining the correct speed and safe following distance will be left to your best judgment.
* Heavier, slushy snow can affect vehicle control. If snow becomes hard packed it can cause an ice hazard on the road surface. Again, you should reduce speed and increase following distance. Determining the correct speed and safe following distance will be left to your best judgment.
* All slow maneuvers such as starting out, steering, backing, and turning should be done smoothly and with extreme care to minimize skids and slides.
* Falling or blowing snow can greatly reduce visibility. In addition, falling and blowing snow can make it hard to see the road, road markings, road signs, and off ramps. If you must continue in snowy conditions, reducing speed and increasing following distance are the best techniques a driver can use to maintain vehicle control.
* As with driving in foggy conditions, the use of high beam headlights while driving in snowy conditions should be avoided at all times. The high-beam "shooting" light will reflect off falling and blowing snow and reflect back at you, further reducing visibility.
* Drivers will also be educated on the dangers of "snow hypnosis". Snow hypnosis occurs when a driver is traveling directly into heavy snow and begins to focus on the falling snow instead of the road ahead. This can cause a hypnotic-like effect on the driver. The danger of snow hypnosis is especially prevalent at night.
* In extreme conditions, chains may be necessary

**Ice**

Drivers need to be aware of changes in road surface conditions that may affect the vehicle's traction. To help, the following procedures for driving on icy roads for this defensive driving policy have been developed:

* As with all extreme weather conditions, if you must continue, the safest techniques to employ are to reduce speed and increase your following distance. But of these two, increasing following distance is by far the most important. Depending on the temperature and road conditions, stopping distance (distance needed to come to a complete stop) on icy roads can increase four to ten times versus stopping from the same speed on a dry road.
* “Black Ice” forms when temperatures drop rapidly and any moisture on the road surface freezes into a smooth, almost transparent layer of ice. What makes black ice particularly dangerous is that you may not realize you are on it until it's too late. Determining the correct speed and safe following distance will be left to your best judgment.
* Bridges and overpasses are other areas to which you should give special attention. Ice will tend to form first on bridges and overpasses because cold air circulates both above and below these structures causing the temperature to drop more rapidly than on normal roads. Any moisture on the road surface of a bridge or overpass will freeze quicker and harder than elsewhere on the road. Extreme caution and a reduction in speed should be used while traveling over bridges and overpasses.

**Night Driving.** All drivers need to be aware of the potential hazards driving at night present. These hazards include fatigue, reduced visibility, poor lighting, other (impaired) motorists, and animals on the road. To help drivers better prepare for driving at night, the following procedures have been developed for this defensive driving policy:

Fatigue is perhaps the most dangerous hazard of driving at night. Nothing we do is worth any one getting hurt.

Fatigue usually sets in at night, but a tired driver, at any time of day, is an unsafe driver. Fatigue reduces drivers' reaction time and perception. All drivers are to review the following fatigue warning signs:

* Your eyes close or go out of focus by themselves.
* You can't stop yawning.
* You are experiencing trouble keeping your head up.
* You experience short-term memory loss. For example, you can't remember the last several miles you have driven.
* Your thoughts wander or you begin to daydream.
* You start drifting into other lanes of traffic, tailgate, or miss traffic signs.
* You experience an inability to maintain a constant rate of speed.
* You must jerk the steering wheel hard to correct a drift and get back into your lane.

If you experience any of these signs, it's time to get off the road as soon as safely possible and get some rest.

* Reduced visibility is a hazard of driving at night. At night, visual acuity (degree of perception) and peripheral vision (side vision) are reduced, and the eyes may have difficulty adjusting from light to darkness. These factors all contribute to reduced visibility while driving at night. The best and safest techniques to counteract these night driving hazards are to reduce your speed and increase your following distance. Reducing speed is also the best way to prevent "over-driving" your headlights.
* Poor lighting on the open highway or on rural roads is another hazard drivers should be made aware of. At night, with poor or no lighting aside from the vehicle's headlights, hazards in the road are much more difficult to see and avoid. You should reduce speed and use extra caution when traveling on poorly lit or unfamiliar roads.
* Impaired motorists (drunk drivers) are a hazard to everyone on the road. Drivers should be especially cautious when driving between the hours of midnight and 0300 (typical bar and tavern closing times). Drivers should be wary of motorists driving in an erratic manner including weaving in and out of traffic lanes, having difficulty maintaining a constant rate of speed, or braking suddenly. If you, as a driver, suspect that you are sharing the road with an impaired motorist, reduce your speed, let the motorist pass, and increase following distance.
* Animals on the road present another kind of hazard while driving at night. Drivers are to be especially alert when driving on roadways lined by woods or tall grass. Animals, especially deer, can jump out in front of an oncoming vehicle with little or no warning. The best techniques to avoid collisions with animals are to not "over-drive" your headlights and to reduce speed. If a collision with an animal is unavoidable, you should drive "through" the animal. This will help prevent a jackknife or rollover type accident.

**Road Construction.** Chances are good that from time to time our drivers will be faced with having to drive on roadways that are being repaired or under construction. Road construction presents several hazards. Because of this, our drivers are expected to approach road construction work zones the same way they would any adverse driving situation and follow these procedures:

* Reduce speed and maintain a safe following distance.
* Drive at or under all special or reduced posted speed limits while traveling through road construction work zones. Safe following distance will be left to your best judgment.
* Be constantly aware of your immediate surroundings, anticipate the possible actions of other motorists, and expect sudden stops.
* Watch for construction workers or vehicles crossing the roadway.
* Use the lane furthest from a construction zone when possible.
* Avoid sudden lane changes and use headlights and four-way flashers when traveling through construction zones.

**Road Hazards.** Drivers should be aware of the potential danger of encountering various types of road hazards including:

* Soft shoulders or severe pavement drop-offs that can cause rollover type accidents.
* Road debris such as tire recaps, metal or lumber can cause severe damage to tires, tire rims, electrical systems, and brake lines. You should be aware of the road ahead to identify potential road debris early and take safe and appropriate avoidance maneuvers.

**Underpasses.** Hitting a bridge, underpass, or viaduct is a danger you should be constantly aware of. This type of accident, often referred to as "topping" a trailer, is always preventable. Drivers need to be aware that the posted height of an underpass is not always accurate. Re-paving and packed snow can reduce the clearance of an overpass enough to cause a problem. In addition, an empty trailer will ride higher than when it is loaded. You should make thorough trip plans. When in doubt of the clearance of an underpass, you should get out of your vehicle and make a visual inspection or find an alternate route.

**Fixed Objects and Special Intersections.** A good defensive driver will observe items in the area around the vehicle that might cause problems. Checking to be certain there is adequate clearance is the primary thing to watch. In the areas of driveways, alleyways or plant entrances, the effective defensive driver will analyze the situation carefully, slow down, sound a warning when appropriate, and be ready to yield to the other driver involved.

**Physical and Mental Condition**

Drivers are expected to manage their physical and mental condition. That especially means keeping a positive attitude when behind the wheel, and taking good care of their physical health. Fatigue is an especially dangerous factor to be aware of.

**Following Distance.** Tailgating is probably the single most common complaint lodged by the general driving public against truck drivers. Here are some specific following distance guidelines:

* 3-second interval at speeds up to 40 mph,
* 4-second interval at any speed over 44 mph,
* add extra time in bad weather or poor road conditions,
* add extra following distance if you are being tailgated.

**Driving Speed.** You should drive consistent with posted speed limits, with due regard given to existing traffic, weather and highway conditions. Never overdrive your headlights at night. That means you should be able to stop safely in the distance you can see clearly in your headlights.

**Right of Way.** As a defensive driver, you should never attempt to exercise the right of way principle. Let the other driver go first. Keep to the right except to pass, or when getting into position to turn left. In town, when you enter a main thoroughfare from a side street, alley, driveway or a highway ramp, make a full stop at any crosswalk, then another full stop before actually moving into traffic.

**Meeting Other Vehicles.** Keep to the right when meeting other vehicles on a roadway. If a vehicle approaches on your side of the road, slow down and pull to the right as far as you safely can. If you have to take this kind of evasive action, and

have actually gone off the highway onto the shoulder, be certain you slow the vehicle down sufficiently before you attempt to come back onto the highway. Never pull to the left to avoid an oncoming vehicle.

When merging onto a highway drivers are expected to:

 • Signal early,

 • Be patient and watch for an opening,

 • Build speed and merge smoothly,

 • Check mirrors constantly.

When exiting a highway drivers are expected to:

 • Signal and change into the right-hand lane early and safely,

 • Signal intentions to exit early,

 • Check mirrors constantly,

 • Reduce speed and exit.

**Curves and Turns.** The most important thing to remember in successfully negotiating curves and turns is to slow down BEFORE you enter the curve. That way you will be able to make any needed adjustments in steering, etc. as required.