



Aggressive Driving Heats Up In Summer

Tips for keeping cool.

It's summer and it's hot! But the asphalt may not be the only scorching thing on the road this time of year. Tempers flare as summer sends throngs of vacationers to the nation's already overcrowded highways, often leading to aggressive behavior behind the wheel.

Of the 5.5 million traffic crashes that occur in the U.S. each year, a substantial number are believed to be caused by aggressive driving, defined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) as occurring when "an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses so as to endanger other persons or property." From exceeding the posted speed limit to following too closely, from failure to obey traffic control devices to obscene hand gestures, aggressive driving has turned America's roadways into high-risk arenas.

Confronting Aggressive Drivers

As a professional driver, it is important to drive courteously and correct unsafe driving habits that are likely to endanger, antagonize or provoke other motorists. But, if you do find yourself the target of another driver's aggression:

- Back off, slow down and move aside...let them pass. Don't let their bad driving be the cause of your accident.
- Don't make matters worse by challenging them or "teaching them a lesson," even if you are right.
- Stay cool and calm; don't react to provocation. Ignore gestures and refuse to return them.
- Avoid eye contact as this can be seen as a challenging gesture and incite the other driver to violence.
- Report serious aggressive driving incidents to the police immediately; you may be able to prevent further incidents by the same driver. But, if you use a cell phone, pull off the road to a safe location.

Control Your Own Temper

Driving can, at times, be a very stressful task. But, it's how you deal with the stresses of driving that will help you keep cool and safe. Here are a few tips on how you can avoid an aggressive driving attitude:

- Reduce your stress on the road: plan ahead and allow plenty of time to get where you're going; consider structuring your schedule to avoid the worst congestion whenever possible.
- Manage your emotions and be aware that your temperament affects your driving.
- Keep your vehicle in a safe and comfortable condition. Maintaining the vehicle's mechanical systems—including the air conditioner—in hot temperatures can bring peace of mind as you make your way down the road.
- Be polite and courteous; allow other drivers to pass, turn and change lanes.
- Don't drive when you are angry, upset, or tired.
- Take a break. When possible, stop, get out of your vehicle and stretch to help relieve stress.

Rise Above The Rage

No matter how foolish or deliberately irritating another driver becomes, the stakes can be high if you escalate an already tense situation. Safe driving is never about winning or losing, or asserting your rights on the road. It's about avoiding all preventable accidents—and getting to your destination safely.

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