

DID YOU KNOW???

DRIVER SELF-ASSESSMENT – SOMETHING WE ALL SHOULD DO

I was recently discussing safe driving with a friend who lives in the Rochester area but was in the area camping at Meacham State Park. He was telling me about something he does routinely when driving – a self-evaluation on how he is doing. When he drives, he assumes the worst, like he is going to have a crash, and therefore drives more defensively to prevent or mitigate a potential collision.

Here are his five performance benchmarks:

1. Making a minor corrective action/avoidance action - 1 point
2. Braking, accelerating, or swerving hard to avoid a crash - 2 points
3. Full braking, horn, or hard swerve to avoid contact - 3 points
4. Minor fender bender - 4 points
5. Major collision - 5 points

In reality, it is likely that many of us do a reduced version of some kind of self-evaluation. For me personally, I actually do a type of self-evaluation as I drive along rather than after completion of a trip, even short local trips.

In addition to the self-assessment that my friend does, he also has defensive driving rules that he has imposed on his wife and children; they are:

1. Before making a turning move or lane change, look twice each way, and continue to look as you make the move
2. When making a move, do it slowly, so even if you are in the wrong, other drivers can avoid you and prevent a collision
3. Don't tailgate – use the 3-second rule, more if poor traction, poor visibility (including where vision is obscured by a large truck), or going downhill
4. Minimize time in a car's or truck's blind spot
5. Know where everything is around you. Reduce risk by looking for helpful clues to other driver's intentions, like brake lights or front wheels turning
6. Never cross a railroad track without verifying twice that there is no train approaching, even when the crossing is protected by lights and gates
7. On expressways, travel at the normal speed of traffic to avoid frequent lane changes
8. Before moving the vehicle, adjust all mirrors for your position
9. Minimize your risk by expecting other drivers to do something stupid, and have an escape route open on at least one side of your vehicle
10. Never take your eyes off the road, especially with distractions caused by other passengers or your own distractions like texting or reading a map
11. Be aware that passing another vehicle is dangerous because of poor depth perception or difficulty in judging speeds of other traffic. Passing on two-lane roads has added dangers
12. As speeds double, your chances of dying in a crash quadruples

These are all good practices and should be an ongoing part of our safe driving. Are you on-board?