

Driver Safety Letter

presented by



Dealing with Congestion on Your Route

June 2020

More and more states are re-opening their economies and relaxing travel restrictions, releasing a flood of new motorists on the highways. Add to that the warmer weather that historically has attracted many types of roadway users, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Finally, more people are taking to the nation's roads – and, in so doing, travelling longer distances – to avoid potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus on airlines. What you have is a “perfect storm” of congestion, driver distraction, fatigued motorists, and drivers unfamiliar with their routes of travel.

Often, these other highway users are distracted and lack the awareness, the experience and the skill required to operate their vehicles safely. So, as you prepare for each route, and even each segment of each route, keep in mind that your primary responsibility should be driving – avoid anything that distracts you from that responsibility, including eating and cell phones. Here are a few tips that will keep you focused.

- **Arrive with the right attitude.** Start each shift well rested, well nourished, alert and mindful of traffic conditions. This applies to your equipment as well – do a thorough pre-trip inspection to ensure that your vehicle is in top operating condition. Know where you are going and potential disruptions and bottlenecks ahead. Always allow plenty of time to complete your journey safely. If you anticipate getting in traffic when you begin your drive, you'll be less frustrated when you do.
- **Maintain safe following distance.** Once behind the wheel, avoid tailgating or following too closely. In fact, leave more distance between you and other vehicles. Passenger cars and motorcycles can stop in much shorter distances and often can be driven erratically especially in unfamiliar areas. Keeping a safe gap between you and the car in front of you allows you a better view of the road, more time to react, and more space to brake or steer out of the way if there's a hazard. Maintain a safe gap when roads are busy and expect a lot of stop-start traffic.
- **Avoid unnecessary lane changes.** Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows other road users to anticipate your movement.
- **Be mindful of pedestrians.** You can encounter them anytime and anywhere – and they are often hard to see in bad weather or at night. Like motorists, they are often distracted by technology.
- **Avoid road rage, in yourself and others.** Aggressive driving can cause many serious problems on the roadway. Be aware of both aggressive driving and the behavior known as “road rage,” and what to do when they occur. That begins with recognizing and avoiding the behaviors in yourself and then avoiding other drivers engaging in these behaviors. For instance, don't “cut off” other drivers and avoid driving too slowly in the passing lanes. Don't gesture at other drivers and use your horn for emergencies only.
- **Stay alert.** Even if stuck in a traffic jam, stay alert, awake, and present in the moment. You always need to know what's happening around you as the road environment can change quickly. Leave yourself an escape route when you pull up behind another vehicle. Don't creep up as close as you can to the vehicle in front of you.
- **Remain focused.** Even when your vehicle is at rest, whether at a stop light or in traffic, keep your eyes on the road. Using your mobile device while stopped can render you unprepared for unexpected situations, such as ambulances and neighboring incidents.

The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and CPC Logistics, Inc., is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at tmoore@nptc.org or (703)838-8898