

Driving Defensively

By Barbara Rutt, High Safety Consulting Services Ltd.

With motor-vehicle deaths being the leading cause of work-related fatalities, driving safely should be a major focus of anyone responsible for the safety of their company's employees. Each year, over 40,000 people are killed and over 2 million suffer disabling injuries on our nation's roadways¹. In 2007, more than 40 percent of work-related fatalities (more than 2,200) were as a result of motor vehicle crashes².

While we can control our own vehicle, many of the hazards we encounter while driving are beyond our control. Other drivers, weather conditions, road conditions, etc. are all things we come across every day behind the wheel, but we cannot control. Learning to drive defensively despite the conditions around us should be as important a training topic as fall protection, trenching, or electrical safety.

In the National Safety Council's (NSC) Defensive Driving Course (DDC), which is being offered by ABC Keystone on March 19, defensive driving is defined and steps are given to prevent collisions. We will discuss what current attitudes drivers have and test the "sense-abilities" of the participants. The importance of occupant-protection systems will be covered, as well as the impact of impaired driving. Everyone knows that impaired driving can involve alcohol or drugs, but what about all the other things that can impair us? Physical and mental conditions, distracted driving, and drowsy driving can have a serious impact on our ability to drive defensively.

During this six-hour course, we will also talk about those hazards that we can control, those we can't control, and how to defend ourselves against these hazards. The top risky driving behaviors will be discussed, along with the habits we should have to be safe drivers.

In the 40 plus years that the NSC has offered the DDC, a lot has changed. Back in 1964, there were over 152 million *fewer* vehicles on the road than today. Seat belts were still optional equipment in vehicles and air bags didn't even exist. With all the innovative safety features available on vehicles today, we should have reduced the

number of injuries due to vehicle crashes, but that is not the case. Approximately one-half million more people are being injured on the roads than 40 years ago. What does this mean? It means that engineers are designing safer vehicles, but we're not being safer drivers.

Driving is an important part of every-day life and work. Make driving safety a part of the safety training program at your organization by giving your employees the opportunity to become defensive drivers. **Join us at ABC Keystone on Thursday March 19, 2009 from 7:30 am – 2:30 pm for the National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Course.** Download a registration form at www.abckeystone.org.

¹National Safety Council's Injury Facts 2008 Edition.

²Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2007 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (preliminary data).

Sharpen your driving knowledge! Driving is something we do everyday...but it accounts for approx. 42,000 deaths annually and is the second leading cause of workplace death in construction. 90% of all crashes are attributed to driver error. Learn the skills & tips that put you in control! Sign up now for the **March 19 National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course!**



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