

Motor vehicle safety for employers and employees

OAR 437
Division 2/N

**Motor vehicle safety for
employers and employees**

It's raining, and the driver of a flatbed trailer loaded with bags of grass seed nods off for a moment and drifts into the concrete divider, scattering debris across the northbound highway. A second truck swerves to avoid the debris and runs into the guardrail. The driver of a southbound SUV slows to look and is immediately rear-ended by another vehicle whose driver is talking on a cell phone. The resulting pileup stops traffic on every feeder road in a 15-mile radius.

Incidents like this one happen all too often, making motor vehicle crashes the leading cause of unintentional injury and death across the nation and in Oregon. (*Injury Facts*, 2005-2006 Edition, National Safety Council.) Motor vehicle crashes have far-reaching effects on victims and their families and cost Oregon employers millions of dollars annually. Developing an effective motor vehicle safety program is one of the best ways for employers to protect their employees and control costs.

Guidelines for an effective driver safety program

Driving is part of doing business at most workplaces, and employers should manage motor vehicle safety just as carefully as they manage any other aspect of their business. Managing driver safety, which starts with commitment from the top, helps to ensure that employees follow safe practices and that their vehicles are properly maintained. **Key guidelines:**

- **Develop a written vehicle safety policy.** Tell employees, in writing, what management expects of them when they're drivers and passengers. Employees should also acknowledge, in writing, that they have read and understood vehicle-safety policy and procedures.
- **Check workers' driving records.** Check employee's driving records before they get behind the wheel and annually thereafter. Screen those who have poor driving records.

- **Investigate accidents.** Ensure that all vehicle accidents are properly reported and investigated.
- **Keep vehicles safe.** Develop procedures that ensure vehicle-safety inspections and maintenance are done on regular schedules. Have employees report mechanical problems to their supervisors immediately.
- **Reward and discipline.** Give credit to employees who have exemplary driving records. Recognition or special privileges can be effective incentives depending on the workplace culture. Make it clear to employees that those who violate safety policies will be disciplined.
- **Invest in education and training.** Ensure that employees understand vehicle-safety policy and highway safety rules when they're hired. All employees should have the opportunity to periodically update their knowledge and skills.
- **Know the rules.** The Oregon Drivers and Motor Vehicle Service's (DMV) *Vehicle Code Book* includes all requirements for vehicle registration, driver licensing, and rules of the road. <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/DMV/forms/vehicodebk.shtml>. Oregon OSHA's motor-vehicle safety requirements apply to *general industry* (Subdivision 2/N, 437-002-0223), *construction* (Subdivision 3/O, 1926.601), *agriculture* (Subdivision 4/U:437-004-3410), and *forest activities* (Subdivision 7/F).

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Top three driver errors resulting in motor vehicle crashes in Oregon — 2004

All crashes

1. Failure to avoid stopped or parked vehicle ahead	29 %
2. Did not have right of way	15 %
3. Driving too fast for conditions	12 %

Significant contributing factor

<i>Stopped in traffic (except for left turn)</i>	33 %
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Fatal crashes

1. Driving too fast for conditions	37 %
2. Failure to maintain lane	10 %
3. Ran off road	10 %

Significant contributing factor

<i>Had been drinking</i>	38 %
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Source: 2004 Oregon Traffic Crash Summary, Oregon Transportation Development Division

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Reminders for all drivers

Buckle up

Seat belts are the most effective way to prevent deaths and serious injuries in traffic crashes. In Oregon seat-belt use is 93.3 percent, the fifth-highest rate in the U.S. All drivers and passengers must use seat belts. Limited exemptions are allowed under ORS 811.215. Vehicle owners are required to keep seat belts working properly.



Stay focused and awake

Distracted driving was a factor in at least 10 percent of motor vehicle crashes in Oregon in 2004. It's common to see people reading or talking on cell phones while they're driving, but driving is not the time for multi-tasking. Drivers make more than 200 traffic-related decisions per mile, so it's critical to focus only on driving.

Drowsiness also increases a driver's risk of a crash and may be significantly underreported in police crash investigations. Such crashes often occur on rural highways when the driver is alone — usually late at night, early in the morning, or mid-afternoon.



Don't drink and drive

Alcohol use was a factor in 38 percent of the fatal motor vehicle crashes in Oregon in 2004. It's estimated that 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in a crash caused by impaired driving. Alcohol, certain prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and illegal drugs can all impair a person's ability to drive safely. Drivers who have a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 percent or more are considered intoxicated under Oregon law.

Keep your cool

Some drivers will do almost anything to get to their destination on time — tailgating, weaving in traffic, and ignoring traffic lights and the rights of other drivers. This *aggressive behavior* contributes to an increasing number of traffic crashes on urban roadways. Aggressive driving is different than the media-inspired road rage, in which the driver uses a vehicle as a weapon or physically assaults another driver; *road rage* is a criminal offense. Keep your cool in traffic and allow plenty of time to reach your destination. When traffic comes to a standstill, play that meditation CD you got last Christmas.



Watch out for pedestrians

Oregon drivers injured 550 pedestrians and killed 45 in Oregon in 2004. Most incidents happened because drivers failed to give pedestrians the right of way. Pedestrians have the right of way at all intersections, even those that don't have painted crosswalks.

- Before turning at a crosswalk *that has a traffic signal*, wait for the pedestrian to clear your vehicle's lane plus 6 feet before you proceed.
- Before turning at *any other crosswalk*, wait for the pedestrian to clear your vehicle's lane and the next lane before you proceed.

Secure tools and equipment

Are you sure that 10-foot ladder you're hauling in the back of the pickup will stay there when you're on the freeway? Unsecured and poorly secured

items are hazards if they become airborne and can harm your passengers or those in vehicles behind you. Make sure such items are properly stored and secured — inside or outside the passenger compartment.

Further reading, viewing, and browsing

The following publications, videos, and DVDs are available from the Oregon OSHA Resource Center.

Publications

- *Five Minutes for Vehicle Safety*, Frank B. Hall & Co.
- *Fleet Safety Made Easy*, Kujat, Jonathon D. (2001)
- *Motor Fleet Safety and Security Management*, Della-Giustina, Daniel E. (2004)
- *Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations*, ANSI/ASSE Z15.1 (2006)

Videos and DVDs

- *Distracted Driver: A Lesson in Road Sense* (VID 1056)
- *Distracted Driving: At What Cost?* (VID 1211)
- *Drive for Life: Defensive Driving* (VID 821)
- *Driver's Alert: Over-the-Counter and Prescription Medicines* (VID 1000)
- *Drowsy Driving: Shattered Lives* (VID 1001)
- *Night Driving Tactics* (VID 1110)
- *Road Rage* (VID 858)
- *Road Rage: How to Protect Yourself* (VID 1007)
- *Water-skiing on Four Wheels* (VID 112)
- *Winter Driving* (DVD 9)
- *Winter Driving Safety* (VID 1256)
- *Workplace Traffic Safety* (VID 482)

Web sites: federal and Oregon state agencies

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health:
www.cdc.gov/niosh
- Network of Employers for Traffic Safety:
www.trafficsafety.org
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration:
www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety/index.html
- Oregon Department of Transportation, Transportation Safety Division:
www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/index.shtml



OR-OSHA (7/06) FS-18

The Standards and Technical Resources Section of Oregon OSHA produced this fact sheet to highlight our programs, policies, or standards. The information is from the field staff, research by the technical resources staff, and published materials. We urge readers to also consult the actual rules as this fact sheet information is not as detailed.

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