

AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

Aggressive driving can be caused by longer commutes, traffic congestion, and other drivers' behaviors. It can also be caused by your own mood, reactions, and ability to deal with stress on and off the road. Aggressive driving is triggered by anger – yours or another driver's. Aggressive drivers are more likely to speed, make unsafe lane changes, ignore the right of way, and violate traffic signals. Aggressive driving behavior includes tailgating, unsafe passing, honking your horn, making rude gestures, or swearing at other drivers.

Don't confuse aggressive driving with road rage. Blaring your horn in traffic or making rude gestures are not illegal, but they can escalate and lead to road rage. Road rage is a criminal act where a driver tries to intentionally injure or kill another driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

Help prevent aggressive driving (and road rage) by first adjusting your attitude. Forget the idea of "winning" on the road. Driving is not a race; it should not be a contest to see who finishes first. Leave plenty of time for a trip so that if traffic or another delay occurs, you can keep your cool. Think of the highway as a conveyor belt – everyone will get to their destination eventually, so there is no need to speed or act impolite to save a few minutes.

Put yourself in the other driver's shoes. Have you ever made a mistake on the road, been lost, or unsure of your turn-off point? Instead of being angry at another driver making the same mistakes, give them the benefit of the doubt. When you make mistakes, acknowledge them and give the drivers around you a friendly nod or wave. Polite behavior makes driving safer.

If you encounter an angry or aggressive driver on the road, don't engage them. Avoid eye contact and do not make (or return) rude gestures or comments. Give an angry driver a lot of room by putting distance between you. Slow down or exit the roadway if necessary, but do not pull off to the side of the road or try to "reason" with an angry driver. Get help by using your cell phone or driving to a public area such as a police station or shopping center.

If you think you have a problem with anger on the road or aggressive driving, get help. Anger management classes or counseling can help you deal with the stress in your life and in your car that may be contributing to your behavior.

Keep your cool on the road and live to work and play another day.

Content Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (Users of Safety Talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations).

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