

Instructor Notes: Depending on your city, traffic can go from bad to worse. Take a moment to discuss how your towing operators can identify bad drivers and how they can avoid being part of the problem.

Safety Meeting 2015 #7 –

Avoiding “D” Drivers

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According to the National Safety Council, traffic deaths have increased every month for the past six months compared to the same time period in 2014 and, even worse, this alarming trend shows no sign of slowing down especially since drivers are already into the “100 Deadly Days” of summer. As if driving weren’t bad enough, it’s even worse for the emergency responders working on the side of the road having to deal with “D” drivers: Drunk, Drugged, Drowsy, Distracted or just plain Dumb. In this safety meeting we are discussing how you can identify “D” drivers and what you can do to avoid them.

Drunk Drivers

According to M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), some tell-tale signs of an intoxicated driver include: their vehicle drifting in and out of the traffic lanes, almost striking an object, curb or another vehicle, slow response to traffic signals (e.g., sudden stop or delayed start), or even driving with headlights off at night. While this list is not all-inclusive, it does cover a lot of ground. If you notice one or all of these dangerous traits, get out of the way, keep your distance and possibly report their vehicle information to local law enforcement.

Drugged Drivers

Even before some states legalized recreational marijuana, it was frequently involved in fatal traffic crashes and drugged driving in general. Similar to alcohol, marijuana impairs a driver’s judgment, motor coordination and reaction time. The one big difference is that drunk drivers overestimate

their driving skills while marijuana-induced drivers tend to “feel” more impaired and generally slow down to compensate. So, based on this data, if you notice someone driving slower than 10 mph below the speed limit, they may be stoned. Not always, but it is a possibility.

Drowsy Drivers

Sleepiness and driving is a dangerous combination. Most people are aware of the dangers of drinking and driving but don’t realize that drowsy driving can be just as fatal. Like alcohol, sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, impairs judgment and increases the risk of crashing. When you are on the road and see another driver yawning repeatedly or rubbing his or her eyes, they have trouble keeping their head up, drift from their lane, tailgate, or hit a shoulder rumble strip, be cautious. Obviously, in the later hours (or early morning) the odds of identifying a drowsy driver are dramatically increased.

Distracted Drivers

Many people think they are good multi-taskers, but that is actually a myth, especially when it comes to cell phone use while driving. But cell phones are just one of the many things that can distract a driver. Other distractions could include eating and drinking, talking to passengers, grooming, reading maps, using a GPS, watching a video and adjusting a radio. Texting is the worse distraction because it requires visual, manual and cognitive attention from the driver. Not surprisingly, the age of the driver plays a big role. Young people are among the most

likely to text and talk behind the wheel. Sixteen percent of all distracted driving crashes involved drivers under age 20. So when you’re on the road and you see a car full of high school kids, create a buffer and give yourself a way out if their car drifts into your lane.

Dumb Drivers

Unfortunately, not everyone is a good driver and odds are you know at least one or two of them. Even though they’re bad drivers, they’re also predictable. Using Jeff Foxworthy’s style:

- If you see someone hit his or her brakes quickly to scare a tailgater, there’s a bad driver,
- If you see a slow driver sitting in the left lane, there’s a bad driver,
- If you see a car with more than three colors of paint on the bumper, there’s a bad driver.

These points were made using humor, but there is some truth to them. If you see any signs of these on the road, you have to remain vigilant and be prepared for the worst.

Closing Thought

“D” drivers can cause a great deal of problems when you’re driving and even more when you are working on the side of the road. Make it a point to protect yourself by avoiding standing close to traffic by using curbside tow/flatbed controls when able, wear appropriate retro-reflective gear and limit your time and exposure.

If you need any ideas on how to prepare and present this information to your drivers, please call me at 847-894-0042 or email me at pgratz548@comcast.net.