



# The Slowdown Lowdown

**Instructor Notes:** *In some situations, driving too slowly can be just as reckless as speeding. Take this opportunity to discuss minimum speed limits with your employees and set clear expectations on when they should or should not drive slowly and how to handle other drivers when they do the same.*

*“Have you ever noticed that anyone driving slower than you is an idiot and anyone driving faster than you is a maniac.”*

– George Carlin

As funny as this saying is, it rings with a little truth about how your speed can affect your safety as well as those around you.

## Too Slow Is Just as Bad

According to some studies, drivers that are driving significantly below the average speed are the ones that are often likely to get involved in an accident. Studies show that a great number of crashes occur when the driver is maneuvering at 10 mph slower than the speed limit. So, someone going 45 in a 55 mph zone has a bigger chance of getting into an accident than someone driving at 65 in a 70 mph zone.

## Too Slow May Cost You Money

An increasing number of states have a message for you: Move over, or pay up. Oklahoma, Oregon and Virginia are racing to become the latest in a wave of states to impose fines on slower vehicles driving in the left lane of multilane highways. The crackdown is an attempt to enforce what legislators say drivers should already know: The left lane on the interstate is for passing. This means even if you're going the speed limit in the left lane,

you should move over if there are others trying to go faster. When slow drivers linger in the left lane of multilane roads, others may be forced to pass on the right, causing confusion and chaos that can lead to accidents.

## Road Rage

A AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study found that potentially aggressive actions – such as tailgating, erratic lane changing or illegal passing – are a factor in up to 56 percent of fatal crashes. In extreme cases, this may escalate to road rage, which is a violent criminal act involving an intention to cause physical harm. In either case, if you are becoming frustrated and upset, back off the slow driver in front of you because they may not be aware of the risk they are posing.

## 4 Types of Slow Drivers

Anybody can drive too slowly at any given time, but here are a few groups of drivers to approach cautiously.

### 1. The distracted driver.

Driving while using a cell phone can reduce driving focus by 37 percent. While texting and driving is dangerous for many reasons, driving too slowly may not be one you immediately think of. But the fact is that taking your eyes off the road and slowing down, as you may do when texting behind the wheel, reduces your ability to process other

information – like the tow truck that just appeared behind you.

**2. Tourists.** We've all been on a vacation or driven someplace unfamiliar. The exciting sights can catch your eye and slow your driving as you try to take them all in. The other issue for many tourists is that, even if they want to drive at the appropriate speed, they're simply not familiar with the traffic patterns or legal limits of the area so they tend to drive slower.

**3. The newly licensed.** Generally, speeding is a common issue with young drivers but sometimes we forget about the other side of the coin. Many teen drivers are also uncertain drivers, unfamiliar with the surroundings and situations more experienced drivers may take for granted. The problem with these drivers is that they may overcompensate for their lack of confidence by staying away from the gas pedal and causing traffic to build up behind them.

**4. Seniors.** The biological effects of aging can lead mature drivers to drive too slowly. It may be because arthritis stiffens the joints, reducing the amount of pressure a driver can exert on the gas pedal, or it can be due to worsening vision that causes nervousness and uncertainty.

## How to Handle Slow Drivers

Have patience. Losing your cool won't help. Stay your course for a minute and see if a slow driver will spot you and move over.

Flash your lights. Sometimes slow drivers on a long drive simply get comfortable in one lane. A few flickers of your headlights might get their attention and get them clearing a path in no time.

Once you safely pass, give a friendly wave to indicate your thanks and to say “no hard feelings.”



This article is a part of TowSafe, a safety program designed for towing operators. For more information contact April at 407-706-6796.