

TOOLBOX TALKS

Dealing with Road Rage

Driving, whether for work or leisure, can be enjoyable but at times is stressful and demanding. Drivers need to be fit, relaxed and rested for the demands of safe travel. Good driving requires a responsible attitude to other road users as well as a high level of concentration, observation and anticipation. The reality is, however, that everyone makes mistakes.

Our attitude as drivers, how we deal with our own mistakes and our reaction to those made by other people, will influence our own safety and well-being and that of other road users around us. Aggressive, selfish or impatient attitudes influence the way we drive. This can develop into a tendency to take irresponsible risks, such as tailgating, exceeding speed limits, undertaking, or jumping red lights.

'Road rage' is defined as aggressive or angry behaviour by a driver of an automobile or other road vehicle. Such behaviour might include rude gestures, verbal insults, deliberately driving in an unsafe or threatening manner, or making threats. Road rage can lead to altercations, assaults, and collisions that result in injuries and even deaths.

Penalties

In the UK, road rage may result in criminal penalties for assault or more serious offences against the person. The Public Order Act 1986 can also apply to road rage. Sections 4A and 5 prohibit public acts likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. Section 4 also prohibits threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent to cause a victim to believe that violence will be used against himself or another.

What can you do?

Many drivers find different ways to keep calm but here are some suggestions on dealing with, and avoiding, potential conflict, "road rage" or red mist.

Before You Set Off

- When we are emotionally upset or psychologically caught up in something else, we are not able to give the road our full attention and so, do not drive safely. Try to ensure you are in a calm, good mood before driving.
- Plan time into journeys in case you are delayed by traffic; this can help to alleviate the pressure you feel if you're running late.

During Your Journey

- Whilst driving do not over-react to, or panic about, another driver's error, bad driving or poor attitude. They may be unaware of their actions. Try to stay away from them and concentrate on driving well and within the law.
- Avoid getting into conflict with another driver. There will be some bad drivers who are looking for a reaction or conflict. "Competing" with another driver could lead to the incident becoming serious. Keep your mind focused on your driving.
- Stay calm and think logically – when confronted by an irate driver don't engage in gestures, headlight flashing or sounding the horn as this will serve no purpose and may exacerbate the situation. It will also distract you. Concentrate on driving responsibly.
- Refrain from eye contact with an angry or aggressive driver as this has the potential to make the situation worse.
- If you find you are being followed by an impatient driver (tailgated) – do not allow yourself to be "pushed" along, intimidated or made to increase your speed. Without actually pulling over or stopping – find a safe opportunity to allow that driver to pass. Driving around a roundabout to enable a tailgater to get past you will add a little time to your journey but can make a significant difference to stress levels.
- If you find that you are being persistently followed by an aggressive driver – try to make your way to a public place, police station or busy street and if necessary call the police. Do not allow an aggressive driver to follow you home.
- Under no circumstances should you endanger your safety or well-being by getting out of the car to deal with an angry or aggressive driver. If confronted with a road rage situation remain in the car with the windows closed and door locked. If necessary, call for help on a mobile phone.
- If you accidentally cause another driver to become angry – hold up your whole hand as a friendly acknowledgement of your mistake – this can often help to diffuse the situation.
- If your mood is affected by an incident during your journey, once you have moved away from any danger, find an opportunity to stop and take time out.
- Focus on the present and your driving rather than the destination or purpose of the journey.

After Your Journey

If you can recognise when you're becoming stressed, angry or impatient while driving, you will be better equipped to deal with these emotions. Try to find time occasionally to reflect on your driving and think about how mood or stress has affected your actions.

References

Toolbox Talk Conflict Resolution, Anger Management and Defensive Driving

Dealing with Road Rage – Questions

Q1. What piece of UK legislation can be applied to incidents of ‘road rage’?

A

Q2. Give two examples of behaviour that may be defined as ‘road rage’?

A1

A2

Q3. What is the definition of ‘road rage’?

A

.....

Q4. If confronted with a road rage situation, you should remain in the vehicle with the windows closed and door locked, under no circumstances should you endanger your safety or well-being by getting out of the car to deal with an angry or aggressive driver? (Delete as appropriate)

A **True** **False**

Q5. There are a number of ways before, during and after your journey to deal with and avoid potential conflict. Give an example of each?

A1. Before your journey

.....

A2. During your journey

.....

A3. After your journey

.....

Employee Name:

Employee Number:

Manager’s Name:

Date: