



## TOOL BOX TALKS



### DRIVE DEFENSIVELY

We always hear mention of defensive driving, but do we really know what defensive driving means? Do we realize the commitment that we have to make to become a defensive driver?

Defensive driving means driving so as to prevent accidents in spite of the actions of others or the presence of adverse driving conditions. Simply stated, defensive driving means no surprises.

Now let's talk about the commitment required to become a defensive driver.

To illustrate this commitment let's look at the detailed requirements of the National Safety Council's defensive driving program. The object of defensive driving is to drive without having a preventable accident. Defensive driving requires you to know and obey all traffic regulations applicable to the area in which the vehicle is being operated.

Defensive driving requires you to be constantly alert for the illegal acts and driving errors of other drivers, and willing to make timely adjustments in your own driving so that these illegal acts and errors will not involve you in an accident. To drive defensively, you must know how to adjust your

driving to account for the special hazards presented by abnormal, unusual or changing conditions—in the mechanical functioning of your vehicle, type of road surface, weather, degree of light, kind of traffic, and your physical condition and state of mind.

Defensive driving requires a thorough knowledge of the rules of right-of-way and the willingness to yield the right-of-way to the other driver whenever necessary to avoid an accident.

Defensive driving requires an attitude of confidence that you can drive without ever having a preventable accident. There is no doubt that a professional code for defensive drivers is not easy to follow. As professionals, however, you must show the way for other drivers and do your best to drive defensively.



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Page 2

To accomplish all that is expected by the professional driver's code, you must follow three basic steps.

**See the hazard**—when driving, think about what is going to happen or what might happen as far ahead of encountering a situation as possible. You should never assume everything will be "all right."

**Understand the defense**—specific situations require specific ways of handling. Become familiar with the unusual conditions which you may face and learn them well so that you can apply them when the need arises.

**Act in time**—once you've noted a hazard and understand the defense against it, act! Never take a "wait-and-see" attitude.

Taking these three steps and keeping the professional driver's code in mind, you'll learn to "give in" a little; to tailor your driving behavior to the unexpected actions of other drivers and pedestrians; to the unpredictable and ever-changing factors of light, weather, road and traffic conditions; to the mechanical condition of your vehicle; and even to how to feel.

