Defensive driving techniques can reduce the possibility of vehicle crashes. Its aim is to reduce the risks associated with driving by proactively avoiding dangerous situations, despite adverse conditions and/or the incorrect actions of others.

**Defensive driving techniques include:**
- Leaving one car length in front of you when stopped in traffic. Be able to see where the tires meet the pavement.
- Looking both directions twice when approaching an intersection.
- Counting 1-2-3 before entering an intersection when the light first changes to green.
- Maintaining a four to six second following distance.
- Checking your mirrors every 5-8 seconds.
- Scanning parked cars for movement and shielding of pedestrians.
- Being prepared to stop at lights that have been green for a while.
- Looking ahead 8-12 seconds to see the “big picture.”
- Knowing what is around you and maintain a “safety” cushion of space.
- Communicating with traffic via using signals, headlights, etc.
- Looking first before moving in any direction, and then keep looking.
- Never back-up unnecessarily.
- Keeping speed appropriate for the conditions.
- Keeping your vehicle in good condition.

**Use these techniques to avoid rear-end collisions:**
- Allow a larger spacing in wet conditions.
- Do not overestimate the movement of the vehicle directly ahead of you, as well as recognizing the traffic flow ahead.
- Allow a larger spacing when following large vehicles that block your view of the road ahead.
- Recognize your vehicle's braking ability and allow a larger spacing when your vehicle is heavily loaded.
- Adjust your speed when entering into an intersection operated by traffic control signals.
- Allow for larger spacing when following smaller, lighter vehicles, such as motorcycles, that can stop more quickly than you.
- Make sure brake lights and turn signals are working, and use them correctly.

For information on accident prevention, please contact Employers Association, Inc. at 763-253-9100.
Unfortunately many tragic accidents have occurred by vehicles backing up without fully checking the areas behind the vehicle. You should always visually clear the area behind the vehicle first, and then turn and look to the rear while you back (use side view mirrors if sight is obstructed). To help reduce the possibility of backing incidents, park so you can pull forward when leaving, or back into your parking space to begin with instead of backing out when you leave.

Deer vehicle crashes are another major concern for motorists. There are approximately 1.5 million deer crashes with deer each year in the U.S. that result in $1 billion in vehicle damage and about 150 human fatalities, with over 10,000 personal injuries.

Most deer crash deaths and serious injuries occur when motorists veer to avoid hitting deer.

For inclement weather driving, be sure to:
- Plan ahead; know the current road conditions
- Make sure the vehicle equipment is in good working order; brakes, tires, windshield wipers
- Clean headlights and have plenty of windshield washer fluid
- Buckle up and slow down!
- Double the distance between you and the vehicle in front of you
- Watch for icy surfaces on bridge decks
- Not get overconfident with four-wheel drive
- Drive with your headlights on
- Look farther ahead in traffic
- Leave room for maintenance vehicles
- Use your low beams in fog
- If you get stuck, generally, the best thing is stay in your vehicle and keep warm while you wait for help, but beware of carbon monoxide emissions

If your vehicle stalls or hangs up on the tracks:
- Get out immediately
- Move away (walk toward the oncoming train and away from the tracks at a 45 degree angle
- Locate the emergency phone number
- Call for help (use 911 if you can't find the railroad emergency phone number at the site)

Seat belts have been proven without a doubt to save lives. In June 2005, safety belt use in the U.S. reached 82% - the highest level recorded. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration estimates that 15,632 lives were saved in 2005 by the use of safety belts. Using seat belts cuts the risk of death by 45% for people riding in cars and as 60% for those traveling in trucks and SUV's. Still, 20% of Americans fail to buckle up. Safety belts can save 1 of every 2 belted fatalities, so of the 1,300 work related fatalities each year, about 2/3 are unrestrained (860), one half of these, or about 430 employees, could be saved each year.

Safety belts, especially lap/shoulder belts:
- Spread the stress and impact forces of a crash along the stronger and broader areas of the body, such as the hips and shoulders, thereby limiting injuries
- Hold you in place while the vehicle absorbs the impact of the crash and decelerates
- The safety belt protects your head and spinal cord
- Safety belts prevent occupants from being ejected from the vehicle or thrown around inside the vehicle, where they can strike objects within the vehicle
- In a crash, a safety belt keeps the driver in place behind the steering wheel and in control of the vehicle, thereby avoiding or reducing the consequences of an accident
- Safety belts can keep you from being knocked unconscious, improving your chances of escape

To help avoid deer crashes:
- Slow down in marked deer caution zones
- Drive within the range of your headlights
- Use of high-beam headlights when driving in deer territory will increase your vision and increase your time to react
- Watch for deer especially from dusk to dawn, in the spring and fall, and near waterways and wooded areas
- Deer travel in groups, so watch for more than one
- Don’t Veer off the roadway; out of control or into oncoming traffic

To cross railroad crossing safely:
- Approach with care
- Prepare to stop; turn off fans and radio and roll down windows
- Stop, Look and Listen both ways
- Look again before you move
- Cross tracks with care
- Keep going once you start, even if lights start to flash or gates come down

Railroad crossings pose another hazard for drivers. In 2003, incidents at public highway rail crossings resulted in 295 deaths, and 893 injuries.

Be Sure to Buckle Up!

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