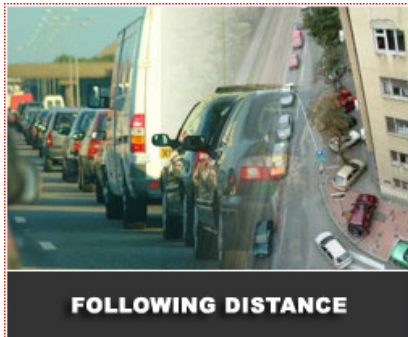


November 4
2019

SAFETY MATTERS

Defensive Driving Saves Lives

The Dangers of Tailgating and Insufficient Following Distances



FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Most rear-end collisions are caused when drivers do not obey sufficient following distances. This is also known as Tailgating and is often regarded as a form of aggressive driving behavior.

Adequate following distances could mean the difference between life and death.

Total stopping distance involves the following:

Human perception time: The time required for a driver to recognize a potential hazard. This time is assumed to be approximately 0.75 seconds in normal situations.

Human reaction time: Once the hazard has been perceived, the driver must respond by applying the brakes. The average reaction time is about 0.75 seconds

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Vehicle reaction time: This is the time it takes for the vehicle to react once the brakes have been applied by the driver. Vehicle reaction time is very quick, usually assumed to be about 0.05 seconds.

Vehicle braking capability: This refers to the vehicle's ability to come to a complete stop once the brakes have been applied

Studies have indicated that when a driver follows another vehicle at 60 mph per hour and the vehicle in front suddenly applies the brakes, the driver following will need at least two seconds to react (sedan passenger vehicles). If there is not enough distance between the vehicles – the driver following may not be able to stop in time.

A driver should stay alert at all times as abrupt stopping could be caused by a variety of unforeseen events such as:

- debris on the road
- pedestrians or stray animals
- other drivers falling asleep, drunk drivers or drivers swerving across the road to evade hazards
- drivers being distracted, i.e. answering cellular telephone calls

To avoid tailgating, use the “3” second rule”: when the vehicle ahead of you passes a certain point, such as a sign, count “one-thousand-one, one-thousand- two, one-thousand-

three.” This takes approximately 3 seconds. If you pass the same point before you finish counting, you are following too closely.

Adjusting Following Distance

The 2-3 Second Rule is only the advised measure when driving conditions are ideal. This should be seen as a bare minimum and should be adjusted to at least 5-6 Seconds in the following situations:

- In adverse weather conditions
- Driving on slippery roads
- Driving at night
- When following vehicles with different characteristics, i.e. motorcycles & trucks
- When towing a trailer

Additional Resources:

<https://www.dmv.ca.gov>

<https://www.arrivealive.co.za>

This fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For additional assistance, contact your California Schools JPA risk manager at 909-763-4900.

