SURVEY SAFETY TIP

#24

DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Defensive driving means that you're on guard, ready to take action and not put your fate in the hands of other irresponsible drivers. According to National Safety Council data, 77 percent of all accidents are attributed to driver error. If you become a good, defensive driver, you can cut that percentage significantly. Your driving etiquette and skill should always represent the City of Los Angeles in a positive way.

Here are some important elements of defensive driving:

Wear your seat belt. It's still the best thing you can do to protect yourself in case the unexpected happens. The City of Los Angeles requires seatbelts at all times.

Allow enough space ahead. Four out of ten accidents involve rear-end collisions, many of which could have been avoided by simply following at a safe distance rather than tailgating. Survey Vehicles require extra distance due to size and weight.

Look ahead. Scan the road and the surrounding area at least a few hundred yards ahead for potential road hazards. Look around on both sides, and keep your eyes open for approaching vehicles, pedestrians, or animals that might enter your path.

Have an escape route. Check your mirrors every few seconds to see what's beside and behind you. Take into account the position of the cars around you and the road ahead.

Don't depend on other drivers. Be considerate of others, but look out for yourself. Don't assume that another driver is going to move out of the way or allow you to merge. Plan your movements anticipating the worst-case scenario.

Keep your speed down. Remember that the posted speed limit applies to ideal conditions and smaller vehicles. You are responsible for decreasing your speed to match the vehicle size, weight and conditions.

Adjust for hazards. By slowing down or speeding up only slightly, or by moving to a different lane position, you may avoid a potentially hazardous situation.

Avoid frequent lane changes. Try to maintain a speed near that of the flow of nearby traffic. Remember your lane discipline and keep right unless passing. Remember to check the blind spot before making a lane change.
Use lights and signals. Turn your headlights on in dim daylight, rain, or other low-visibility weather conditions, and remember to always use turn signals. In city driving, direct eye contact and gentle gestures might help clear any doubts over who has the right of way.

Keep a proper driving position. Maintain a comfortable, upright driving position, with both hands on the steering wheel (preferably at the nine- and three-o'clock positions). This will put you in a better position to make sudden avoidance maneuvers.

Be aware of Blind Zones. See safety Tip # 19

Cut out distraction. Any time you become preoccupied with distractions, you're letting your defenses up. No eating, drinking, adjusting radio, cell phone use etc. Wait until you're stopped in a safe place.

It's all about the attitude! Although defensive driving includes all of the above considerations, its better described as, driving is a privilege that you share with many others. Irresponsible driving on your part could put your life and the lives of others in danger.