

## Summer.. What does it mean to you?

To me it means no more snow shoveling. Of course there is the ceremony of packing away the boots, hats, parka, snow brush and scraper for a few months.

Most of all there is no slip sliding away on the ice and snow.

It all sounds great now. To spend some time at the beach, soccer field or the ballpark and, of course, the back yard barbeque with family and friends.

Maybe the car is packed to the roof with screaming kids and a carsick dog. That is the formula for a distracted driver. The internal car distractions are just too much; you want to drown out the noise by cranking up the radio and know that is not going to help. But wait it gets worse - you have to deal with the external distractions also. Such as the road construction, kids playing and cyclists out for a ride. What about those people that are out there with toys in tow behind their underpowered SUV and no experience. Or the real men with the overpowered SUVs that are towing an oversized trailer behind them like it were not there, risking everyone's life by spending most of the trip out in the passing lane on the big highway or the quiet country road.

Now I do not want to appear to be the negative person here because there are some very good drivers out there. Those drivers will share the road, signal all turns, turn off the cell phone, drive at a reasonable speed and over all be courteous to those they share the road with. However, let's be honest, these drivers are few and far between.

My summer message to everyone is drive with safety in mind. Watch out for the other drivers. Do what you can to make your and their summer day a positive, memorable one.

**Driver safe and enjoy the summer.**

Mike Kroetsch

**Transportation Safety & Compliance Solutions**

*If you want your  
dreams to come true  
the first thing you  
must do is wake up.*

Author unknown

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## Under the hood pre-trip inspections

For the truckers that have been around as long as I have, you may recall a gentleman by the name of Don Stewart. He was a consultant for the then Transportation Safety Association. He would start most of his safety meeting asking who has had their breakfast today and after a few hands would be raised he would say "Breakfast is your most important meal and it is not healthy that you skip this meal".

For some reason that has stuck with me and I think of one of Don's safety meetings every time a driver shows me a less than perfect vehicle inspection. Now I am sure that some of you are trying to figure out what the connection is and I will tell you. Yes, Don was right there are benefits to having a breakfast. I think that breakfast and pre-trip inspections are both important things that a driver does in his/her day. Your pre-trip inspection is the best, or better yet, the only way to tell if that transport unit is road ready.

More and more drivers all the time ask me if they should check under the hood when doing a pre-trip inspection. Some are entry level drivers, but the one the other day had 20 years of experience.

Over the years I have chatted about this very subject with fellow safety professionals and we are lost for reasons why they are asking this question. Of course they need to look under the hood!

Maybe we should point the finger at the MTO. When you go there for your test they do not ask you to check under the hood. You will tell them that you did a full inspection under the hood before you arrived at the test centre and assure them that everything was okay. The rumor is that a driver once hurt himself when doing the inspection so they do not do it anymore. Regardless, that should not be stopping an employer from correcting the situation when they run across it. After all, on pre-employment the driver would have been requested to do a pre-trip inspection including the components under the hood.

In the last few days I have seen a few articles pointing the finger at MTO and the driving schools. The MTO according to the articles should be regulating the schools better. The schools are blamed for the lack of trained drivers out there. A driver school is out there to help a wanna-be driver to learn the basics and get a driving job. It should be up to the new employer to take that driver and his skills and turn him/her into a professional driver.

Just remember, a driver that is not doing a proper vehicle inspection is going to get him or herself into trouble. If you have hired that supposedly competent driver there is responsibility on you, the carrier, as well.

Maybe it is time for a safety meeting regarding vehicle inspections as a result of all the standards that were changed back in 2007. Was and that the last training that the driver received on the standards?

## **Is it defensive driving or is it decision driving**

Whatever you call it your drivers do require ongoing training.

I have numerous presentation that I deliver to drivers depending on the season as well as topics relating to fleet collision history. As information changes or I get different ideas I will update the presentation. I am always looking for new and exciting ways to present the information and most important to get the drivers to buy into safety. Let's face it, not every driver wants to be at the safety meeting regardless of whether you feed them breakfast, BBQ burgers or include donuts and coffee at break time. I find it very rewarding when one of those persons approaches me after the meeting and compliments the meeting and that they have learned something new.

For years we have called this defensive driving. I recall someone back in the 80's that had a good course that was called AVOID. It is rather a simple but true concept. We all hope that our drivers wish to avoid a collision.

I like the term Decision Driving. Really, if you think about it, we have very little control of what is happening around our vehicle. Being aware of the things we do not have control of is Defensive Driving and Avoid Driving. Now a driver has to make decisions, some of them rather quickly and the driver has to hope that they are the right decisions.

Many drivers that over the years have received ongoing training do not give any of this a second thought and whether you call it Defensive Driving, Avoid Driving or Decision Driving it is all instinct to them on how to react accordingly to get home safely.

Driving today is getting so complex. There are the day-to-day pressures of on time deliveries, getting back home for the special family function, and making it past the open truck inspection station. Then there are the over the road conditions, busy traffic, roundabouts, construction zones, drunk drivers, distracted drivers, and inexperienced drivers. With the summer coming we have the lost tourist or the weekend warrior out there towing the big oversized toy with his underpowered SUV.

I have just touched the tip of the iceberg on the list of items that a driver does not have control of and things they must be reminded of daily.

Think about giving your driver a little education. Some of it will be new information and some will be refresher. But it is all information that they must have to make the right decision to avoid a collision to get the load there on time and back for the family function.

## **Driving too fast for conditions**

Drivers encounter all sorts of conditions from day-to-day. Heavy traffic, detours, construction zones, bad weather, breakdowns and accidents blocking multiple lanes... all of these situations can affect their attitude, energy and judgment.

Driving too fast for the conditions means going faster than reasonable based on the conditions around the vehicle. Most drivers think this is limited to bad weather, but it could be any of the issues mentioned above.

## Driving too fast for conditions (continued)

The FMCSA states, “Driving too fast for conditions is defined as traveling at a speed that is greater than a reasonable standard for safe driving. Examples of conditions where drivers may find themselves driving too fast include: wet roadways (rain, snow, or ice), reduced visibility (fog), uneven roads, construction zones, curves, intersections, gravel roads, and heavy traffic.”

Driving too fast for conditions robs the operator of time needed to react, steer, brake and avoid problems. Speed increases stopping distance, and the raw energy stored in the vehicle — possibly translating what might have been a fender bender into a crash with ambulance and tow truck.

Learning self-discipline to slow down in response to challenging situations is one mark of a truly professional driver, or at least an operator who really cares about being safe and getting home to his/her family without incident.

### Key Places to Slow Down

Several specific areas should be treated with extra caution regardless of the posted, legal speed limit:

- streets near neighborhood playgrounds and/or schools
- areas with heavy foot traffic or cycling lanes
- construction zones
- marked wildlife crossing areas
- railroad grade crossings
- curvy roads where sight lines are limited (can't see around the bends)
- approaching the crest of hills where stopped traffic may be waiting

### Key Times to Slow Down

The most obvious time to slow down is during extreme weather conditions. Additionally, driving at night may be a time to exercise appropriate caution. Many crashes, especially fatal and serious injury crashes, occur because drivers failed to reduce their speed for one of these special conditions.

### MIKE'S comments on the above article

I have witnessed fleets that have made it through the ugliest winter conditions setting records for a low number of collisions. However, when that nice weather comes the numbers get reversed and the fleet experiences some serious collisions and vehicle damages. Why? Drivers get complacent or over-confident, failing to recognize the existing hazards.

- Be aware of your surroundings, scan all around and use your mirrors,
- Know what other drivers are doing.
- Be cautious at intersection and highway interchanges.

*My first thought when I read the article above was this would be a good one to save for a winter edition. After a little more thought I figured why wait get it out now and let drivers think about slowing down and when winter comes they are ready for it. (source: March 7, 2013 by safetyismygoal)*