

KMS DRIVING 101 COURSE

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I. Before Proceeding

You must have a current driver's license. If you do not, please contact the [Nebraska DMV](#).

The most current drivers manual is located [here](#).

Upon completion of this course, you will be required to complete an online test and an on-the-road test. This is for your own safety as well as the safety of other employees and other people on the road. Proof of this course completion is also beneficial in keeping our insurance rates lower.

II. Proceed with Caution

Because of technology, we drive safer cars today, and many years of ads and public information transportation safety campaigns have made many of us safer drivers. However, despite this progress, the number of auto accidents and fatalities nationwide is still overwhelming and is, quite frankly, unacceptable. The reality is that most car accidents are the result of human error and could have been prevented; therefore, safe driving behaviors breed safer drivers.

You may not know this, but automobile accidents are the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 3 and 34 in the United States. The best way to reduce the risk of being involved in an accident is to practice safe driving behaviors. Whether you're just learning to drive or you've been behind the wheel for decades, it's a good idea to review some of the best driving practices for safe driving. To get the most out of this important course, proceed with caution, humility, and self-awareness.

III. Pre-Trip Inspections and Vehicle Maintenance

Before departure, make sure you and your vehicle are prepared for the trip ahead. Some accidents occur due to mechanical issues, many of which could have been foreseen during pre-trip inspection.

A. Outside the Vehicle

1. Tires

Check your tires, and pay attention to tire pressure. One of the most common maintenance problems that can lead to a crash is improper tire pressure. Uneven tire pressure, or pressure that is too high or low, can impact performance or lead to a blowout.

2. Leaks

Check for any automotive fluids leaking. Pay special attention to and report any leaks that make a puddle larger than the size of your fist.

3. Lights

Check for proper functioning of headlights and tail lights.

B. Inside the Vehicle

Familiarize yourself with a new-to-you vehicle before proceeding. Locate the different instruments in the vehicle: windshield wiper switches, cruise control, fog lights, and the like. If you are trying to locate these items while driving, you will no longer be focused on driving.

1. Seat and mirrors

Adjust your seat first and then adjust rear view and side mirrors. Are you comfortable and able to access the pedals? Can you clearly see where you need to see through the rear and side mirrors?

2. Parking brake

Where is the parking brake located in case you need to use it? If the brake is engaged, make sure you release it before proceeding.

3. Gauges

Are your fuel and oil levels adequate?

4. Horn

Does the horn work? What kind of pressure is needed to make it sound?

5. Windshield wipers

Do you know where to turn on and adjust the windshield wipers? Are they wiping adequately? Is there sufficient wiper fluid?

6. Temperature controls

Adjust the temperature controls – heat and air conditioning – before proceeding.

7. Pay special attention to your brakes.

If you notice some "softness" in the brake pedal, or feel a vibration when the brakes are applied, this could be an indication that the brakes could be wearing out or you may have a problem with the car's hydraulic system. If you notice any of these symptoms with company owned vehicles, please let management know.

IV. Safe Driving Behaviors and Tips

A. Develop a defensive driving mindset.

Defensive driving is an approach to driving that will help you prevent accidents. You can learn how to avoid accidents by correcting problems that may become dangerous.

B. Eliminate distractions; keep your eyes on the road.

1. Common distractions include eating, talking, adjusting electronic devices, and, of course, cell phone use.

2. Many states have passed laws that ban the use of hand-held cell phones while driving, and currently, 46 states have a texting ban on all drivers.¹
 3. In Nebraska, texting while driving is illegal. There is currently no prohibition on handheld cell phone usage while driving, except for novice drivers (under the age of 18).
- C. Don't speed.
1. Plan ahead; leave earlier so you're not rushed.
 2. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. In 2008, speeding was a contributing factor in 31 percent of all fatal crashes, and 11,674 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes."²
- D. Scan the road and assess all immediate, developing, and potential threats.
1. Don't simply keep your eyes fixed on the car right in front of you.
 2. Scan traffic ahead of you 50 to 100 yards and to the side of you to anticipate potential accidents, so you will have time to adjust accordingly.
- E. Limit lane changing and keep your eye on lane changers.
1. Many car accidents happen when a driver suddenly changes lanes and gets rear ended. Choose a lane and stay there as long as possible.
 2. If you aren't the one changing lanes, then keep an eye on those who are. Many drivers try to slip between cars, even if it is too dangerous to do so.
 3. Watch all of your mirrors so that you can see anyone who may be approaching you quickly. Slow down to let them pass if necessary.
- F. Be aware of blind spots.³
1. Check your own blind spots, especially before making lane changes.
 2. Stay out of others' blind spots as some drivers carelessly change lanes without checking their blind spots. Either accelerate so they can see you clearly, or slow down so you are safely behind the other car.
- G. Pay special attention at intersections.
1. Many accidents occur at intersections for a number of reasons.
 2. Some drivers simply start driving when the light turns green, assuming that everyone stops when the light turns red. Check both ways before proceeding through an intersection.

¹ http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html. Accessed June 1, 2015.

² <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811166.PDF>. Accessed June 1, 2015.

³ A blind spot in a vehicle is an area around the vehicle that cannot be directly observed by the driver while at the controls, under existing circumstances. Definition accessed from www.thefreedictionary.com.

3. Never try to rush through a changing signal. Be patient and wait for the next light.
- H. Keep your distance.
1. Maintain a safe distance between you and the car ahead.
 - a) When you drive too closely to another vehicle, you increase your risk for an accident because you leave yourself very little room to avoid an accident. Drivers need time to react if that car makes a sudden turn or stop.
 - b) Follow the "three second rule."⁴ Try to stay at least three seconds behind the person in front of you. If you have a larger vehicle, allow more room so that you will have enough time to stop. At night or in inclement weather, double this time to six seconds.
 2. Before and while you are braking, ensure that there is a safe distance between you and the vehicle behind you.
 3. Avoid those with bad driving behavior.
 - a) Allow the car to simply pass you by slowing down or by possibly changing lanes.
 - b) If you need to pass a bad driver, try to keep a good distance between you.
- I. Stay calm at all times.
1. Be aware of aggressive driving behaviors, which are those behaviors that are contrary to the tips in this manual and may also include intentionally aggravating other drivers, initiating conflict, using rude gestures or language, or flashing their headlights out of frustration. These behaviors aren't just annoying, they're dangerous.
 2. Avoid making eye contact with other drivers.

Aggressive driving is often escalated when drivers look directly at one another. Aggressive drivers are often looking for ways to anger others rather than getting angry about something that has just occurred.
 3. It is critical that you do not demonstrate aggressive driving behaviors, but it is also essential that you remain calm in the face of these types of behaviors from others.
 4. However, you need to remain calm in the middle of frustrating traffic issues, accepting delays, such as staying in your lane behind a slower car instead of abruptly changing lanes.
 5. In these trying circumstances, consider yielding to other cars, even if you technically have the right of way.

⁴ Find a stationary object on the side of the road. When the car ahead of you passes it, start counting seconds. At least three seconds should pass before your car passes the same object.

- J. Stay alert; don't drive drowsy.
 - 1. Driving drowsy can be just as dangerous as driving drunk. At highway speeds, one or two seconds of inattention can lead to disaster.
 - 2. A study conducted by researchers at Virginia Tech reported that 20 percent of all accidents have sleepiness as a contributing factor.⁵
 - 3. To stay alert, make sure you get a solid seven to eight hours of sleep, not just on the night before a long drive, but on a regular basis. Failure to get enough sleep every night builds a sleep deficit that can leave you drowsy and unable to focus.
 - 4. If you're driving and feel drowsy, take action immediately. Allow another crew member to take over behind the wheel, or find a rest area where you can catch a few hours of sleep or take a break until you're feeling more alert.
- K. Exercise extra caution in inclement weather (fog, heavy rain, snow, ice, etc.).
 - 1. Take all of the other tips presented here and intensify the importance of them; for example, drive below the speed limit if necessary, maintain extra space between you and the car ahead, and be especially careful around curves.
 - 2. If you're driving through weather conditions you don't know well, consider delegating driving duties to someone who does, if possible. If the weather worsens, just find a safe place to wait out the storm.
- L. Don't drink and drive.

In 2012, over 10,000 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving accidents, accounting for 31% of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.⁶

V. Conclusion

Be honest. How well are you doing at practicing safe driving behaviors? If you finished reading this and don't believe you have any areas to work on, you are probably not very self-aware. Consider re-reading this course information and work to locate two or three safe driving behaviors that you can begin working on today.

[PROCEED TO TAKE DRIVING 101 COURSE TEST](#)

⁵ <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2006/04/2006-237.html>. Accessed June 3, 2015.

⁶ <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811870.pdf>. Accessed June 1, 2015.