

Since the inception of ICRMP in 1985, our most frequent cause of Property/Casualty claims has been auto claims. No other claim category comes close. The bad news: auto crashes are frequent and severe for Idaho local government agencies. The good news is that auto crashes can be reduced by focusing on safe driving!

## Defensive Driving

Most accidents are caused by driver error. Be prepared to react promptly to emergencies by driving with both hands on the wheel. You can reduce your chances of crashing by knowing and using the standard crash prevention formula:

- **Scanning:** To be a defensive driver, you have to see what is going on. Avoid a fixed, straight-ahead stare that may let you drift off in daydreams. Keep your eyes moving; learn to read the road.
- **Look ahead:** Good drivers keep an eye on what's happening about 10 to 15 seconds ahead. That's about a block in city driving. By doing this, you'll avoid the kind of last minute lane changes, turns and stops that often cause accidents.
- **Look to the Sides:** As you approach any place where other cars, people or animals may cross your path, look to both sides. Don't rely on traffic lights or stop signs. Always watch out for other drivers – they may run the light.
- **Look Behind:** Check the traffic behind you frequently – several times a minute – so you'll know if somebody is tailgating, coming up too fast or trying to pass. Most rear-end collisions are caused by vehicles following too closely.
- **Blind Spots:** These are areas near the left and right rear corners of your vehicle that are not visible in your mirrors. Never rely on your mirrors alone. Before you make any move to the side, quickly turn your head to see if your blind spot is clear. Also avoid driving in someone else's blind spot. It's as important for other drivers to see you as for you to see them.
- **Identify:** Scan the road ahead for potential hazards such as a vehicle, pedestrian, animal or situation that could force you to slow down, speed up or turn.
- **Predict:** After spotting a potential hazard, predict what will happen. Generally, it's safest to predict the worst. For example, if you see kids playing on a street corner, prepare for one of them to run in front of you.
- **Decide What to Do:** The key to defensive driving is making a sound decision ahead of time rather than reacting to danger at the last second.
- **Execute:** The final step is to execute your decision in a smooth, predictable manner – in time to avoid an accident.

*Source: From Idaho Drivers Manual (2014)*

### Discuss:

1. Have you or someone you know had a "close call"?
2. Do you consider running a red light unacceptable? Have you ever run a red light?
3. Do you consider tailgating unacceptable? Have you tailgated in the past month?
4. Do you think driving feels safer, less safe, or about the same as it did 5 years ago?
5. Thinking about the people who you know well, like your friends or family members, does anyone sometimes drive in a way that you feel is unsafe? Why?