

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!

## Keep a Space Cushion

To avoid a collision you need time to react to danger. Try to keep plenty of space between your car and others on all sides. Stay in the middle of your lane and always make sure there is enough room ahead to stop or pass safely. If a car follows too closely, slow down and let it pass.

## Following Distances

“Tailgating” (driving too close to the car ahead) is a common cause of accidents. When following another car, leave yourself enough space to stop in any situation. You must also be sure your brakes are in good shape. Know how quickly they will stop you under any conditions. Test them often, particularly when the road is wet, icy or snowy.

There is no perfect formula for following distance, but the three-second following distance rule is the minimum recommended safest procedure to use. At high speeds or in bad weather you will need to increase your following distance.

## The three-second rule:

- Choose a fixed object such as a sign or tree ahead of the car in front of you.
- As the car ahead passes the object, count off three seconds (one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three).
- If it takes at least three seconds before you pass the object, you have enough distance for a sudden stop.
- In bad weather, the three seconds should be increased several times to give an extra margin of safety.

*Source: From Idaho Drivers Manual (2014)*

Add additional seconds for any condition that is less than perfect. That can include heavy traffic, not feeling well, or other distractions. Add additional seconds to your space cushion if it is raining or snowing. If another driver cuts in front of you into your space cushion, just ease your foot off the gas pedal and slow down until you once again have a safe distance between you and the other car.

The key is to be alert so you can adapt to whatever unique circumstances you might be driving in.

## Discuss:

1. Have you heard of the term Space Cushion before?
2. Why is having a space cushion important when you drive?
3. Have you or someone you know had a “close call” with tailgating or being too close to another vehicle?
4. Discuss what to do when someone is “tailgating” you.