



Army *Safety* Gram



Are You A Defensive Driver?

Defensive driving involves removing the element of surprise from driving hazards. Having preventable accidents or even close calls means you are not paying enough attention to the traffic and conditions around you. You know other drivers and pedestrians are going to make mistakes and you know some driving conditions will be less than ideal. As a driver, it is your job to anticipate, observe, and avoid these hazards.

If you are often surprised by actions of others on the road and by changes in road conditions, you are not driving defensively.



Try this quiz to determine if you are being surprised at the last second by hazards which you should be anticipating ahead of time:

- ◆ Do you frequently have to slam on your brakes because a vehicle stopped in front of you?
- ◆ Do you often get cut off by other drivers?
- ◆ Do you get stuck in the wrong lane at intersections?
- ◆ Are you distracted by things other than the traffic pattern; such as people on the sidewalk?
- ◆ Are you frequently surprised when children or pets dart out in front of your vehicle?
- ◆ Do you find yourself in the middle of an intersection on an amber light because a green light changed unexpectedly?
- ◆ Are you surprised by other drivers running red lights or making unsafe lane changes?
- ◆ Have you ever attempted a left turn in front of an oncoming vehicle because its signal indicated it was going to turn left also - but it did not?
- ◆ Have you ever nearly struck a bicycle or small vehicle hovering in the blind spot beside the rear of your vehicle?
- ◆ Have you had to swerve around a car door as a driver exits a parked vehicle?
- ◆ Have you ever gone into a skid on an unexpected slippery road surface?
- ◆ Do you ever skip your safety belt for short trips with lots of stops?
- ◆ Do you ever express your temper or other bad mood in the way you drive?
- ◆ Do you ever drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?

Answering yes to any of the above questions is a clue you are not always driving defensively.

Defensive driving means being prepared to drive as safely as possible, trying to anticipate and avoid all hazards. You can't do much to change other drivers or pedestrians, nor can you do much about road and weather conditions. What you can do is stay alert and plan well ahead of time how to avoid these hazards. A good defensive driver is rarely taken by surprise!

