



Decision Driving

**Arkansas Workers' Compensation
Commission/**

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When you drive, are you aware of what's going on all around you? Do you anticipate what the driver in front, to the side, or behind you may do? Do you see all the potential hazards and plan how you will react to them? Always? Or, like most of us, only sometimes?

You're probably a good driver, but how many times have you.....

- ▶ **Jammed on your brakes to avoid another car?**
- ▶ **Had a near-miss at an intersection?**
- ▶ **Run a red light or a stop sign?**
- ▶ **Almost sideswiped another vehicle?**
- ▶ **Skidded out of control?**

The five principles of Decision Driving can help you avoid these all-too-common emergencies. Accident-free driving isn't just a matter of luck or skill. In large part, it depends on the decisions you make and the actions you take based on those decisions. Driving skill is important, but it doesn't make ice less slippery or improve visibility in fog. Decision Driving improves your ability to see hazards before they become dangerous, and to decide on the best course of action to avoid them.

Research has shown that drivers make about 50 to 100 decisions per mile. Most are simple decisions, i.e. deciding to slow down or signal a lane change. But others are critical, such as deciding where and when you should swerve to avoid an oncoming car. Most of our decisions are based on what we see.

The Five Principles of Decision Driving

1. Expand Your "Look-Ahead" Capacity

- Check what's happening down the road, where you will be in a few seconds.
- Don't just focus right in front of your vehicle.

2. Size Up The Whole Scene

- Know what's going on all around your vehicle. Scan the scene for developing traffic situations: construction zones, congested intersections, erratic drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, changing road conditions, and so on.

Make it a habit to check your mirrors every five to ten seconds.

3. Signal Your Intentions Early

- Let other drivers know in advance what you intend to do, so they'll have time to make correct driving decisions of their own. Your horn, lights, turn signals, road position, and speed can all help tell them what you're planning.

4. Plan An Escape Route

- Think ahead - you'll need to react quickly if the unexpected happens. Time your passing moves carefully.
- Plan a way out that allows you enough time, space, and visibility to stop or maneuver smoothly. Stay out of tailgating traps.

5. Take Decisive Action

- If you've followed the first four principles, you'll know what to do, and you'll have the time and space to do it safely.
- Make the decision and do it.