

Workplace Violence Training Program: Road Rage

Tips to Prepare for Training Session

Make a list of the key points to cover as well as props and exercises to use in the session, which should include:

- How to make a note of an aggressive driver's license plate and record time and place of offensive driving, without compromising safety (don't ever write on a piece of paper while driving).
- A small audiotape recorder or digital recorder you can display and show trainees how to use to guard against road rage.
- Role-playing to demonstrate road rage scenarios and the dangers of knee-jerk reactions.
- What could happen if one of your workers retaliated against an aggressive driver.

Start Session with Fatality Report

First ask your trainees to talk about their safety and security concerns. Then relay this true story.

Joe Edmonds got an early education in aggressive driving. Riding with his father, he learned that other drivers were, in his words, "idiots". On one occasion when a group of hooting and hollering young people passed his dad's family sedan, his father's response was to floor the accelerator pedal to teach them not to make fun of him.

Joe followed his dad's example, venting his own frustrations with other drivers by yelling and gesturing angrily. But Edmonds' demeanor behind the wheel took an abrupt about-face last year after one of his sons, Jason, 23, lost his life in a collision attributed to road rage.

"I refer to myself as a recovering aggressive driver," says Joe, who, with help from sons Jordan and Cameron, has been delivering seminars on road rage since his son's death.

"It's difficult every time, because you're dredging up your emotions, but I get to tell everyone what a great guy he was and I get to show them (through video clips.) I also get to feel like his memory is helping somebody, somewhere, avoid what happened to us," says Edmonds. "He's there with me. He gets me through it."

Jason, who was pursuing an acting career, didn't have a driver's licence. Had he been a driver, he might have been more vocal against the driver whose actions were to cause his death and those of two other young passengers in the car.

The driver had been transporting Jason and three other friends when they got behind a vehicle which was moving slowly. The driver's response was to overtake the slower vehicle and then slow down dramatically. The other driver took the bait and did the same to him. The deadly cat and mouse game progressed until Jason's driver lost control of the vehicle. The car crossed the median, clipped another vehicle, spun sideways and was struck broadside by a minivan and then a second vehicle.

Jason and one friend died at the scene. Another succumbed to his injuries in hospital. The driver of the slow-moving vehicle who sparked the road rager's wrath left the scene.

Edmonds says he later found out that Jason's driver, who faces three counts of criminal negligence causing death, had a history of driving recklessly. A former girlfriend says she broke up with him because she feared she'd die as a result of his driving.

"There's less and less patience in society nowadays, partly because of the pace of society. We want everything now. There's also less respect for people in general and for authority," he says.

Edmonds is speaking publicly about his son's fate in hopes of getting people to assess their own aggression behind the wheel and take steps to control it. He also provides tips on how to avoid engaging a road rager's attention.

"If recounting the details of this tragedy can save even one other family from experiencing what we've gone through, my son's death will have had some positive meaning," he says.

Joe Edmonds quotes American behaviorist Redford Williams, who says people should ask themselves three questions when they are starting to lose control:

- Is this situation important to me?
- Is my reaction justified by the facts?
- Is there anything I can do to fix the situation?

"If you can't answer yes to any of these questions, then don't do anything," says Edmonds.

Deliver This Safety Talk

Here's a road rage Safety Talk script you can work from.

Road rage is the name of a growing problem on our streets and highways. Angry drivers can cause collisions and have been known to assault, stab or shoot drivers who annoy them.

Keep control of your emotions when you drive. Take a few deep breaths, check your speedometer, and slow down mentally and physically if necessary. Allow enough time to get to your destination, taking into account delays related to weather, heavy traffic, construction, and other drivers' errors. Otherwise, you might find yourself in a collision or an angry confrontation.

How do you recognize the angry driver before it's too late? Here are some behaviors to watch for:

- Speeding, especially in congested areas, with no regard for other vehicles or pedestrians.
- Failing to stop at stop signs and red lights.
- Obstructing other vehicles by preventing them from passing or changing lanes.
- Bumping another vehicle from behind.
- Weaving from lane to lane, speeding, and tailgating.
- Passing on the right side of a vehicle and passing on the road shoulder.
- Making rude gestures and facial expressions.
- Yelling, screaming, horn-honking, flashing headlights, or deliberately blinding other drivers with bright lights.

When you do see angry drivers, stay out of their way! If an aggressive driver tries to pick a fight with you, back down. If you retaliate, the incident can quickly escalate from angry to life-threatening.

Steps you can take to protect yourself and others from a raging driver include:

- Move out of the way.
- Don't challenge or compete with the angry driver by speeding up or tailgating.
- Never retaliate by cutting the other driver off.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Don't respond to nasty gestures.
- Call the police at a roadside telephone or on a cellular phone and be ready to describe the vehicle and give the license number, location, and direction of travel.
- If an aggressive driver you've encountered is involved in a crash, stop and wait for police so you can report what you witnessed.

Final Word

Drive your best at all times. While there's no excuse for aggressive behavior on the road, be aware and willing to accept the fact that your driving may irritate another driver.