

# Ten-Minute Training Topics

## Driving Too Fast for Conditions

### Statistics

“Adverse weather conditions appear to be associated with an increased incidence of speeding-related crashes involving large trucks. Data from the FARS indicate that in 1997, 25 percent of all speeding related multi-vehicle large truck fatal crashes occurred during adverse weather conditions” - Office of Motor Carrier Safety, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

“Speeding reduces a driver’s ability to steer safely around curves or objects in the roadway, extends the distance necessary to stop a vehicle, and increases the distance a vehicle travels while the driver reacts to a dangerous situation.” - Office of Motor Carrier Safety, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

“...15 percent of the nonspeeding-related multi-vehicle large truck fatal crashes occurred during adverse weather conditions. For the speeding-related crashes, 16 percent occurred in rainy weather (compared to 10 percent for the nonspeeding-related crashes) and 7 percent occurred during snow storms (compared to 2 percent of the nonspeeding-related crashes).” – US Department of Transportation Publication No. MCRT-00-004

### Introduction

The goal of “safe driving” is to avoid collisions; however, “safe driving” isn’t just obeying traffic laws like speed limits – why?

### **It’s possible to drive within the speed limit and still drive too fast for “conditions”.**

There are several conditions that should cause us to consider driving with greater caution:

- stress and emotional upset,
- poor weather,
- traffic congestion,
- the condition of your vehicle (tires/brakes/steering, etc),
- your own physical well being (if you are tired or feeling sick, etc.)

Other types of conditions include: approaching intersections that have view blocks (can’t see cross traffic), blind curves, and roadways that may be slick with fallen leaves or oils from the asphalt after a rain storm. Loss of control from hydroplaning (tires riding on top of a layer of water) is another form of driving too fast for conditions.

**Each of these situations can make it harder for you to recognize a problem, react to it safely, and stop (or avoid it) in time.**

### Adjusting To The Conditions

We have to drive to get the job done so we need to adjust our driving to the conditions we are likely to encounter. Here are some tips to consider:

1. Preparation for dealing with conditions starts **before** the trip – careful inspection and maintenance of the vehicle will help avoid breakdowns and minimize other problems:
  - a. Check for dull wiper blades that could create visibility problems from a ‘streaky’ windshield. Check washer fluid levels.

- b. Check tires for proper inflation and tread depth (not only to help your driving, but under-inflation decreases tire life and fuel efficiency, too!)
- c. Clean and test lights – if your headlights are covered in dirt they will not illuminate the roadway as effectively. This could increase your reaction time and decrease the space needed to stop or avoid a problem.
- d. Test and inspect brakes, and other mechanical systems

Also, before heading out, plan your trip. Considering the weather and traffic conditions, how long will it really take you to make the proposed trip? Are there any road construction projects along your route? Do you have any alternate routes planned in case of unexpected tie-ups? The first step in arriving on time safely is accurately estimating travel time under the current conditions.

2. Minimize distractions as you drive. Avoid using cell phones, two-way radios and similar devices unless its an emergency and in compliance with your company's policies and local regulations. If you become lost, pull over before looking at maps, etc.
3. If you become ill while driving, report in with your office – let them know your condition and location.
4. Slow down if weather conditions deteriorate suddenly. Rushing to get to your destination can increase your odds of getting into a dangerous situation.
5. Stay calm. Its easy to get upset when running behind schedule or when traffic conditions get tough. Staying calm isn't always easy, but it can be one of your best strategies to avoid collisions as your attention can remain fully focused on the road ahead.
6. Seek help when needed. Asking for help when conditions are interfering with your trip is always a good idea. Getting advice from your office, locating alternate routes, spotting areas where you can safely rest are examples of how you could get help when conditions team up against you.
7. Always use your seatbelt – just in case there is a collision!

### **The Bottomline – Adjusting Your Speed to Match Conditions**

Ultimately, adjusting your speed to cope with the conditions is your responsibility. You should consider slowing down whenever:

- you can't see well (especially ahead of your vehicle) for any reason
- your vehicle is becoming difficult to control (due to road conditions or mechanical issues)
- rain, snow, sleet, ice or other slippery conditions are getting worse
- you feel ill, tired or unable to concentrate (consider taking a break to get a some light exercise, and check in with your office)

The unfortunate, likely outcome of driving too fast for conditions is either a ticket or a collision. Choose to be safe by:

- Preparing for your trip with route planning (allowing adequate time for the trip) and pre-trip inspections, etc.
- Adjusting speed as needed for conditions that arise during the trip
- Staying calm and asking for help if needed

# “Safe” Speed?

## It Depends on Conditions



- Plan your trip – allow enough time
- Inspect your vehicle before heading out
- Weather, traffic, and other conditions can delay you
- Check in with your office – let them know if you are having trouble with your trip.
- Stay Calm, SLOW DOWN, & Seek Help if Needed!

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