

PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN: Avoiding Road Rage

Traffic delays, distracted drivers and stressful commutes can test anyone's patience, but a split-second emotional reaction behind the wheel can quickly turn dangerous. Knowing what road rage looks like, why aggressive driving has serious consequences and how simple choices – staying calm, creating distance and avoiding escalation – can help keep you and others safe on the road.



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Understanding and Avoiding Road Rage

The National Library of Medicine defines road rage as encompassing a variety of aggressive behaviors by the driver of a motor vehicle, which seem well beyond the perceived offense committed by the victim. These behaviors range from shouting, screaming and yelling at another driver to using a weapon, including the vehicle, to incite damage to the victim or the victim's vehicle.

Why Aggressive Driving Is a Statistical Death Sentence

According to Drive Team, aggressive driving isn't just "rude," it's a primary factor in American road fatalities. Consider these metrics:

- 66% of all traffic fatalities result from aggressive driving maneuvers.
- 37% of road rage incidents now involve firearms.
- 49% of these conflicts are triggered by a distracted driver who inadvertently cuts someone off or lingers at a green light.
- More than 12,000 preventable injuries and hundreds of murders have been linked to these escalations over recent study periods.

Examples of Road Rage

No two drivers are the same, so the way they express their frustration might be different. Some signs that a driver might be upset include:

- Tailgating
- Speeding
- Cutting other drivers off
- Running red lights or stop signs
- Swerving in and out of heavy traffic
- Not using signals
- Preventing other cars from passing or changing lanes
- Flashing bright headlights
- Passing a stopped school bus

When aggressive driving escalates into road rage, you might see a driver:

- Throw objects at a vehicle
- Scream at other people or make angry gestures
- Ram another vehicle
- Sideswipe another vehicle
- Force another vehicle off the road

How to Avoid Road Rage While You Are Driving

Give yourself time to get where you are going

Before you even get behind the wheel, create realistic expectations about your travel.



If you need to be somewhere at a specific time, make sure you factor in expected traffic or possible delays. Planning and setting proper expectations can reduce your future stress and frustration levels.

Don't drive while experiencing intense emotion

If you had a frustrating day at work or had a fight with a friend or family member, you might not be in the best headspace to get behind the wheel. If you are already angry or upset, don't drive. Put off non-essential trips until you calm down. If you have something scheduled that you can't miss, ask someone else to drive, or consider calling a rideshare service or taking public transit.

Build positive driving habits

Don't speed through traffic or weave between vehicles. Avoid cutting off other drivers and making rude gestures or remarks.

Only use your horn if necessary

Car horns are just one small hand movement away, but they

are primarily designed for emergency use. It's best to lay off the horn and show the other driver a little grace.

Be understanding of other drivers

Before you allow your frustration to build, try putting yourself in the other driver's seat. Chances are you have accidentally sat at a green light for a few seconds or forgotten to signal ahead of a lane change. If you remind yourself that other drivers are not perfect or out to get you, it can help prevent you from responding aggressively.

Tips to Avoid Road Rage From Other Drivers

Remove yourself from the situation

It's important to avoid drivers exhibiting dangerous behavior however you can. Create distance between you and the aggressive driver by moving over to let them pass or slowing down and watching them speed off into the distance.

Ignore drivers who are being rude

Ignore angry gestures – you don't want to escalate the situation, and you never know what could set someone off and make them become violent.

Call for help if necessary

If you're the target of an angry driver, call 911 immediately and drive to a public location or your nearest police station. Even if an aggressive driver is only targeting one vehicle, they are a threat to everyone on the road. Calling the police helps ensure everyone's safety.

Apologize after a mistake

No driver is perfect, so always apologize when you make a mistake. If you inadvertently proceed without the right of way or get too close to the car in front of you, a friendly wave and smile can help keep everyone calm.

The bottom line: It's important to stay in control of your emotions behind the wheel. Only you can control your own behavior and driving decisions. Remember to drive defensively and always be prepared to take specific actions to keep yourself safe from aggressive drivers.

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