

## Responsible Driving

The responsibility of operating any vehicle in a responsible manner ultimately lies with the individual driver.

Always be aware of potential distractions while driving.

These may take many forms, including:

- eating and drinking
- reading or writing
- using a wireless device
- grooming
- minding children
- conversing with passengers
- smoking
- adjusting in-car stereos and electronics
- minding pets

The following strategies can help minimize the risk of distractions while in your vehicle and let you FOCUS ON DRIVING:

- Always buckle up, keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- Know your vehicle and where the controls

are located.

- As much as possible, preset your preferences before you go and adjust them when you are stopped.
- Try to schedule times for breaks and meals to avoid being on the road at these times.
- If you must eat or drink in your car, unwrap packages or remove lids while the car is stopped.
- Pull off the road if you need to consult a map or other directions.
- Or, if you have a passenger, let them be the navigator.
- Always wait until you get to where you're going to read a note or write something down.
- Keep conversations light and focus your attention on driving.
- If necessary, pull over or suggest to your passenger(s) that you talk in more detail when you get to your destination.
- Tell passengers that you will have time to look at things when you get to your

destination.

- Never use wireless data services such as text messaging, Web browsing or e-mail while operating a vehicle.
- Avoid unnecessary calls on your cell phone.
- Allow your voice mail to answer a call if traffic is heavy or driving conditions are poor.
- If you must make or receive a call:
  - Keep conversations brief and avoid engaging in stressful or emotional conversations.
  - Advise the person to whom you are speaking that you are driving and, if necessary, suspend the call or safely pull off the road.
- Be familiar with handset or hands free features such as speed dial, redial and voice-activated functions.
  - Program frequently-dialed numbers on your handset.
  - When dialing manually, dial only when stopped, or have a passenger dial for you.
  - Consider using a hands free device to make it easier to keep both hands on the wheel.

- Ensure that the hands free device is in place before operating a vehicle.
- Pull over to deal with children in the back seat.
- Secure pets in a separate location so they won't distract the driver.
- Personal grooming is important to everyone, but give yourself enough time to get ready before you get in your car, or wait until you get to your destination to freshen up.
- Avoid leaning over to search for items such as your sunglasses, cell phone and wallet while your car is in motion.
- Take a minute to check to make sure you have everything before you go or wait until you're stopped to look for items inside the car.

### Teaching Responsible Driving to Your Teen

As a parent of a teenager, you are probably dreading the day when they are old enough to drive.

How can you prepare both the child and yourself for that fateful day?

The statistics regarding accidents for teen drivers

are staggering.

One third of all deaths of sixteen to eighteen year olds happen in a car crash, so what is a parent to do?

First, make sure that your teen takes a driver's education course.

Not only does this provide your child with the basic driving skills, it may help reduce insurance premiums which can be astronomical for a teenage driver.

As a parent, however, you can't rely on the school system to provide your teen with all the experience they need to drive alone.

Spend time driving with your teen in many different situations.

If you live in a highly populated area, drive with your teen during rush hour to help give them guidelines on how to merge, when to stop, and how close to follow.

Statistics show that more teens are killed driving at night, so spend time driving after dark with your child.

Drive with them in all types of weather conditions as well.

You never know when your teen will be caught in a situation when the weather may change and they need to have some idea of

what to do.

Also, stress to your young driver the importance of wearing a seatbelt and avoiding distractions, like talking on the phone, adjusting the radio or even eating while driving.

You may also want to restrict the number of passengers your teen is allowed in the car until they gain more experience.