



Road Rage and Aggressive Driving

It's been over ten years since the term "road rage" was coined. Road rage is defined as any behavior by a driver that causes or threatens to cause harm or injury to another driver. But much more prevalent – and often equally dangerous – is "aggressive driving." Aggressive driving includes passing on the wrong side, tailgating, cutting off or intentionally hemming in another driver, among other things. Frequently, aggressive driving causes collisions and sometimes it can escalate to road rage.

Whatever your normal driving habits, many drivers can be provoked into aggressive driving – in response to aggressive driving by others. In fact, according to the 2006 Response Insurance National Driving Habits Survey, "fully one-half of drivers who are subjected to aggressive driving behavior on the road respond with aggression of their own." Of those responding, 34% honk their horn, 27% yell, 19% use obscene gestures, 17% flash their headlights, 7% respond in kind, and 2% admit to trying to run the driver off the road. You may not realize it, but this kind of behavior – even when you don't initiate it, but merely respond to another driver – constitutes aggressive driving, and may even get you a ticket.

Think about it. Have you ever tailgated a driver who cut you off on the highway or pulled out in front of you when they shouldn't have? Or have you tailgated or flashed your lights at another driver to get them to go faster? How about intentionally driving more slowly to "get back at" a tailgater? Have you ever passed a slower driver on the right at an intersection to get ahead of them? All of these behaviors constitute aggressive driving.

Who's most likely to drive aggressively? Men are more than women, younger drivers (aged 18-24), drivers with children, and drivers who use cell phones while driving are all more likely to respond aggressively. But how do you avoid aggressive driving? The experts at AAA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) offer this advice:

- Don't tailgate, and leave enough space between you and the car in front of you to merge comfortably.
- If you are in the left lane and someone wants to pass you, move over and let them pass.
- Use your horn only to communicate – not to "yell at" other drivers.
- If you encounter an aggressive driver, don't make eye contact. Pull over if you have to, but give them plenty of room, and don't provoke them.
- Don't make inappropriate gestures.
- Use your turn signals to ensure other drivers are aware of what you're doing.

Most importantly, drive cautiously and courteously. It's the best way to ensure you get where you want to go as safely as possible!