

VEHICLE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

INTRODUCTION

Driving a vehicle is a necessary part of our everyday experience in modern society. Yet approximately 50,000 people lose their lives and countless others suffer permanent disability as a result of traffic accidents every year. Whether you drive as a part of your job responsibilities or simply to commute to work, driving statistically exposes you to the single greatest degree of risk in your everyday life.

The purpose of this section is to make some suggestions on how you can reduce your risk of being involved in a traffic accident. Additionally, some rules and regulations relating to the operation of vehicles on university business are provided.

The driving task can generally be divided into three important aspects: the driver, the vehicle, and the roadway. In most accidents, one or more of these are often found to have been deficient.

Although each of the three is important, the key to being a defensive driver is that every driver accepts a personal responsibility for his/her own well being as well as for others who must share the same road.

THE DRIVER

Defensive driving is a full-time job. Driving involves the mental processing of many things, including road conditions, other vehicles in the traffic stream, and the operation of the vehicle being driven, often requiring split-second judgement. If a person is overly tired, in a hurry, or under the influence of drugs, including alcohol, the ability to correctly process and interpret correctly all the information necessary for safe driving can be severely hampered. If followed, the following suggestions will help to reduce the risk of an accident caused by driver error.

1. Take frequent "stretch breaks" when driving long distances to avoid falling asleep at the wheel. The small amount of time it takes will assist you in maintaining concentration and make the trip more enjoyable.
2. Read all labels and instructions that come with prescription labels and non-prescription drugs. Many drugs can cause drowsiness.
3. Leaving early for your destination will allow extra time for the unexpected, such as weather conditions or road construction.
4. Many accidents can be traced to a vehicle going either too fast or too slow for existing conditions. You will reach your designation just as quickly and with much less risk if you drive with the flow of traffic rather than always trying to get ahead of it.
5. Communicating your intentions in traffic is very important. Use turn signals and your brake lights far in advance to get the attention of other drivers.
6. The vast majority of vehicle drivers are seriously injured or killed as a result of impacting the interior of their vehicles or by being ejected from the vehicle during a crash. Using seat belts is the single most effective step you and your passengers can take to reduce your risk should an accident take place. Study after study has shown the value of occupant restraint systems in both experimental and real-world crash testing. Do yourself and your loved ones a favor...BUCKLE UP!

LOUISIANA TECH GUIDELINES FOR DRIVER CERTIFICATION

Authorized Drivers

Only employees or students authorized by the university will be allowed to operate vehicles for university business. Authorized drivers can be faculty, staff, graduate students, or student workers. All employees or students that are required to drive a university vehicle (including motor pool vehicles) or are reimbursed by the State of Louisiana for using their personal vehicle shall be an authorized driver.

It is the responsibility of the administrator of each budget area to have an authorization form filled out and sent to the of Environmental Health & Safety Department. A copy of this authorization form is in Section 11. This authorization form shall be forwarded to the Environmental Health & Safety Department before the employee or student is allowed to drive a university vehicle. Only individuals possessing a current and proper class driver's license will be authorized. An authorized driver must report revocation of driver's license to their appropriate supervisor.

Required Training

All authorized drivers must attend a Louisiana Safe Driver Course within three months of entering employment. They must attend a refresher course at least once every three years unless their class of license requires other training or testing. The Environmental Health & Safety Department provides the Louisiana Safe Driver Course periodically depending on the demand. Please contact the Environmental Health & Safety Department at 257-2120 for scheduling information.

Responsibilities

Administrative heads of each budget unit will be responsible for stressing the importance of the department's driver safety program to all employees. They are responsible for identifying employees authorized to drive state vehicles. The departments shall make time available for each authorized employee to attend the driver training course. Department heads must ensure that all motor vehicle policies and procedures are followed and that reports are submitted on a timely basis.

Employees who are authorized to drive state vehicles are responsible for the safe operation of those vehicles and maintenance of all necessary records especially those required by the CDL driver. They should report any unsafe condition or accident involving the state vehicles to their supervisor and are responsible for having a valid driver's license for the class of vehicle they are operating.

Accident Reporting

In case of accident do the following:

1. Call the police.
2. Do not talk to anyone, except the police, about how the accident happened.
3. Make no statements about payment of damages. The other party will be contacted by the Office of Risk Management in Baton Rouge.
4. Admit no liability (fault).
5. Sign nothing (except police report, if asked).
6. Obtain the names, addresses, and daytime telephone numbers of all witnesses.
7. Obtain the address and telephone number of the police department completing the accident report.

8. Call the Environmental Health & Safety Department (318) 257-2120 and the Office of the Vice President for Administrative Services (318) 257-2769 and notify them of the accident.
9. Fill in the first page of the accident report form (located in the glove box of each vehicle, Form #DA2041).
10. Give the completed report to the Environmental Health & Safety Department as soon as possible.
11. The telephone number for the Office of Risk Management is (225)342-8484.

USE OF VEHICLE OCCUPANT RESTRAINT SYSTEMS

In accordance with the mandate by the Governor of the State of Louisiana in Executive Order No. EWE 85-6 and Systems Safety Policy SSP-18-85.

Each Louisiana Tech University employee who rides in a university vehicle or a privately owned vehicle on official travel status shall utilize the complete occupant restraint system provided in those vehicles.

For information on transporting of personnel in open bed trucks and trailers, see section by same heading.

It shall be the responsibility of each department head to take what actions they deem necessary to assure that employees utilize the occupant restraint system while on official travel status.

In the 1988 legislative session, a bill was passed on the use of occupant restraint systems. House bill No. 1158 requires that "each driver of a passenger car, van, or truck having a gross weight of six thousand pounds or less...in this state shall have a safety belt properly fastened about his or her body at all times when the vehicle is in forward motion. The provisions of this Section shall not apply to those cars, vans, or pickups manufactured prior to January 1, 1981."

The Environmental Health & Safety Department recommends that all employees and their families wear vehicle occupant restraint systems whenever they are in a vehicle, not because it is the law, but because it could save your or a member of your family's life.

TRANSPORTING OF PERSONNEL IN OPEN BED TRUCKS AND TRAILERS

All employees shall remain entirely within the confines of the sides and tailgates of open bed vehicles. No extending of arms or legs over, on, or through sideboards or tailgates is allowed. Employees shall be seated on fixed seating provided in the bed of the truck or on the bed itself.

BYPASS STARTING OF TRACTORS

Bypass starting occurs when an operator "bypasses" the normal safety or starting system.

The following safety rules shall be observed by all operators:

1. Never start a tractor by shorting across the starter terminals.
2. Keep your tractor's starting system in good working order so you can start it from the operator's station.
3. If the tractor has a neutral start switch and will start in gear with the key or starter button, something is wrong. Have it repaired immediately.
4. Never wire around or defeat the neutral start switch.

5. Always make sure the tractor is in park before dismounting.
6. Never start the tractor from the ground.

VEHICLE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE SHOPS

Safe vehicles, trucks, and autos (and other rolling stock) are a must for transportation of university personnel and materials.

Items that bear considerable attention include but are not confined to the following:

Ventilation: The shop shall be equipped with a well maintained and workable ventilation system capable of exhausting carbon monoxide fumes to the outside.

Floor Fans: Floor fans, if used, shall be guarded front and back with a metal mesh guard with openings no more than 1/2".

Tire Airing: Tires, particularly truck tires, with locking rims should be inflated in a steel airing cage. Tires shall never be over-inflated. Defective locking rings shall be replaced. Rings shall be seated properly.

Locking Chains: If a tire must be mounted outside the shop, a chain shall be placed around the locking ring and locked.

Jacks: If a jack must be used to raise a vehicle, the raised vehicle shall be blocked up (blocks of metal stands). The jack shall be in good mechanical condition.

Spark Plug Cleaners: Cleaners in good condition (sand blast), goggles, or face shields shall be available for mechanics.

Parts Cleaning: Dip tank with fusible link in cover shall be available for parts cleaning. Gasoline shall never be used as a cleaning solvent. Solvents with flash points higher than gasoline are readily available and shall be used for cleaning.

Hand Tools: See Section, "Safety Rules for Control of Hand and Portable Power Tools."

Chainhoist/Floor Crane: Chains and/or cables shall be inspected frequently for breaks or severely worn spots. Electrical controls shall operate smoothly, and hoist or crane capacity shall be visible to operator.

Bench Grinder: Bench grinder shall be securely fastened to stand or work bench to prevent "walking." Grinder wheel must be guarded, and spindle and nut shall be covered. Grinder work rest shall be adjusted to no more than 1/8" to wheel.

Air Pressure: Air pressure used for cleaning shall not exceed 30 psi at discharge nozzle.

Floors: Floors shall be free of oil and grease. Absorbent compound shall be available for covering oil and grease spots.

Work Benches: Work benches shall be neat and clear of removed parts and tools not in use.

Fire Protection: Shop shall be equipped with B-C type extinguisher; they shall be properly tagged and inspected. Approved safety cans shall be available for disposing of oily rags and towels.

HIGH RISK DRIVERS

To maintain compliance with the State of Louisiana Office of Risk Management's Driver Safety Program, the Louisiana Tech Office of Environmental Health and Safety must extend the annual driving record review to all persons authorized to drive university owned or personal vehicles on university business. If an employee or authorized driver is found to violate the provisions of the Office of Risk Management Policy, they will not be allowed to driver a university or personal vehicle

on university business until such time as they meet the provisions of the policy. The department head of the affected driver will receive a copy of the notification. Quoted below is the Office of Risk Management Policy:

"It is the agency's (Louisiana Tech's) responsibility to designate which employees are authorized to drive vehicles on state business. The authorization process shall include a review of the employees motor vehicle driving record and their respective class of license. The agency should also determine when driving responsibility must be taken away from an employee because of reckless operation of a vehicle or traffic violations,.

*Only individuals possessing a current and proper class driver's license may be authorized by the agency to drive a motor vehicle on state business. **High risk drivers** are those individuals having three or more convictions, guilty pleas, and/or nolo contendere pleas for moving violations or individuals having a single conviction, guilty plea, or nolo contendere plea for operating a vehicle while intoxicated, hit and run driving, vehicular negligent injury, reckless operation of a vehicle, or similar violation within the previous twelve (12) month period."*

If for privacy or any other reason, an individual wishes to relinquish their driving privileges, they may request in writing that their name be removed from the authorized driving list. Anyone found in violation of the above policy, anyone not having completed the driver safety program or anyone removing their name from the authorized list will not be permitted to drive a university vehicle or personal vehicle on university business.