

DRUNKS AND TAILGATERS

Dealing with Bad Drivers

Bad drivers are hazards to everyone's highway safety. Among the worst offenders are drunk drivers and tailgaters. Unless you're a law enforcement officer, it's best to avoid them if you can. If you can't, adjust your driving to deal with the hazardous conditions they create.

You can avoid many drunk drivers by staying off the road on Saturday and Sunday mornings after 2 a.m. That's when heavy drinkers leave the bars and parties and drag themselves home to bed. The same holds for holidays in general. But tailgaters, unfortunately, keep no such predictable timetable. They're on the road at all hours, all days. You have to deal with them.

How to Handle Tailgaters

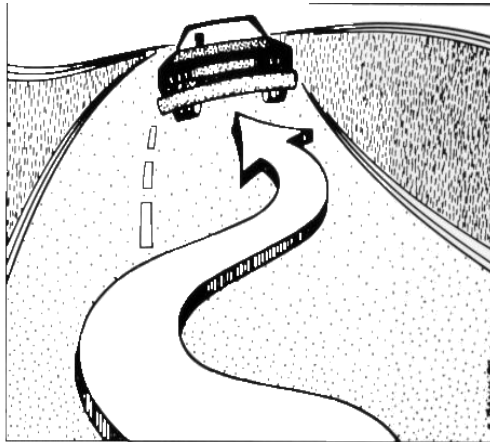
If someone is tailgating you, the best defense is the least aggressive one. Otherwise, you're in danger of causing the very accident you wish to avoid. For instance, you may be tempted to scare him off by hitting your brakes. But that's a mistake. For all you know, that driver is tailgating because he finds it exciting. If so, an angry response on your part could play right into his game.

It's equally ineffective to speed up in hopes of increasing the distance between you and the tailgater. First of all, your speed increases the danger of the situation. Second, the tailgater may be grateful for your increased speed. He may stay with you and continue to tailgate.

The simplest and safest technique, and the one that's most likely to be effective, is simply to switch to another lane and let the tailgater go on ahead. But, if that's not practical, try a variation on the two-second following rule.

In an auto, the rule says, you follow the vehicle ahead of you by at least two second, depending on driving conditions. In a heavier vehicle, the lag is increased to at least four seconds.

With a tailgater close behind you, simply double your lag distance. This requires no sudden or sustained slowing and results in



no lost time. It may discourage the tailgater by demonstrating that you intend to drive cautiously. Often, at that point, he'll either back off or will pass you.

Impaired Drivers

Because alcohol and other drugs impair a driver's judgment and distort his perception of what's going on around him, your only immediate defense is to identify the impaired driver quickly, then give him plenty of room. But you can help get him off the road. Pull over for a brief time, if necessary, to avoid the hazard. Then call the local police or state highway patrol immediately, by telephone or on your CB radio, so they can stop this dangerous driver before somebody gets hurt.

Impaired drivers typically are recognized by some combination of these behaviors:

1. Weaving or swerving.

2. Very low speed.
 3. Erratic signaling
 4. Erratic braking
 5. Sudden, unnecessary stopping.
 6. Reckless acceleration or deceleration.
 7. Speeding.
 8. Near-collisions.
 9. Driving with head out window, or with window down in cold weather.
 10. Driving in wrong direction.
 11. Slow response to traffic signals.
 12. Driving on lane markers.
- Drinking is a factor in more than 50 percent of fatal motor-vehicle accidents. But dangerous drivers don't have to be a negative factor in your life. Watch out for them, give them plenty of room and protect your own safety.