

Module 9 – Sharing the Road

We constantly share the roadway with others: vehicles of all sizes, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcycles, and animals. Therefore you need to know and obey basic traffic laws regarding other users. You also need to know when to yield the right of way and try to anticipate what actions they might take that could cause you problems.

Identify high-risk situations in time to avoid a collision. The more complex the driving situation, the more you have to search for and identify potential conflicts. When you perceive what you think might be a potential problem situation ask yourself:

- What are the rules of the road that govern this situation?
- What might cause a collision?
- What will I do to avoid a conflict?
- What might other drivers do when they notice what is happening?

Train yourself to search for hazards. Predict the actions of other road users that are sharing your traffic path. This module covers many issues associated with sharing the road with other road users. At the conclusion of this module you will become familiar with techniques for safely managing:

- Two-way-left-turn lanes
- Toll lanes;
- Sharing the road with large vehicles, mature drivers, aggressive drivers, bicyclists, and transit and school busses.

We will also cover topics including sharing the road with: Emergency vehicles; Pedestrians; and Animals.

Two-way-left-turn lanes make it possible for drivers to make left turns into streets, driveways, parking lots, or schools without blocking traffic from behind. The vehicle turning should wait while opposing traffic passes by. Sharing a turn lane with oncoming traffic to make a left turn can be challenging. Safe guidelines for using a two-way-left-turn lane include:

- Do not move into the lane too soon.
- Watch for vehicles pulling out of entrances and side streets.
- Be aware of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the road.

Two way left turn lanes may also be used as a pedestrian refuge when there is no pedestrian crossing available.

Do not use a two-way-left-turn lane as a through lane. Two-way-left-turn lanes do not disrupt traffic flow and thereby reduce rear-end collisions caused by drivers who do not see a left-turning vehicle paused in traffic. When used to turn left to enter the road and merge into traffic, two-way-left-turn lanes allow drivers to cross just the lanes of traffic, going in one direction, rather than having to navigate both directions of traffic flow at once.

When an approaching road sign includes the word "Toll," you have to be prepared to pay for access with either cash or a valid E-pass. Many tolled facilities are transitioning to all electronic transactions. Be sure to know before you go; which facilities accept cash and which ones do not.

In Florida, in 2010 large trucks were involved in 14,057 crashes and 237 crashes. Buses (9-15 passengers and 15 and over) were involved in 2,257 crashes and 25 fatal crashes in Florida in 2010. Motor homes (RVs) were involved in 194 crashes and 2 fatal crashes.

Although light trucks perform in a manner similar to passenger cars, they are usually higher profile and heavier with different tires and suspension systems. A high profile vehicle allows the driver to see over surrounding traffic and search further down the road ahead for potential dangers. However, that extra height may cause problems when entering certain garages and enclosed parking spaces.

Pickup trucks, vans, and SUVs pose other problems to car operators. These vehicles make it more difficult for passenger car drivers to see through, around, or past them. They also cause more glare when approaching or following other traffic because their headlights are higher. In addition, the shape and height of light trucks makes them susceptible to adverse winds.

Historically, mature drivers obey speed limits and adhere to traffic rules to the best of their abilities.

You need to be aware of the main causes for mature driver crashes so you can be prepared if you encounter a mature driver on the road; they include:

- Failure to yield right-of-way;
- Failure to obey signals;
- Improperly negotiating intersections;
- Unannounced lane changing;
- Backing-up without looking; and
- Driving the wrong way down one-way streets.

Bicyclists are sharing the roadway more often than ever. People increasingly use bicycles for transportation, recreation and exercise. Bicycles are vehicles and their operators must obey all traffic laws and rules of the road just like other vehicle operators. However, as with other roadway users, make no assumptions that they will. Anticipate how the road condition, environment, or traffic situation will affect bicyclists' actions. Bicyclists might enter your path then swerve to avoid a puddle or grate, or just not follow the traffic rules.

As you approach a bicyclist from behind adjust your speed and position. Slow down and create a wide space. Do not pass when there is not enough available road width to do so safely. Do not pass a bicyclist if you cannot safely move out of your lane. Be patient and follow at a distance until it is safe to pass. From a distance, you may communicate your intentions to pass by signaling with a tap on your horn. Do not get up close behind a bicyclist and use your horn.

Remember that effective in 2010 the state of Florida mandated that a vehicle “must pass the bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle at a safe distance of not less than 3 feet between the vehicle and the bicycle or other nonmotorized vehicle”.

When your approach speeds are higher, slow and provide a greater separation distance. When turning, yield to oncoming bicyclists. Be aware when other traffic is approaching, a bicyclist may be hidden from view.

When preparing for a right turn at the approach to an intersection or a driveway; be aware to not turn across the path of a straight-through bicyclist who may be on your right. When a bicycle lane is present, safely merge into that area to make your right turn. When preparing to turn left and searching for a gap in oncoming traffic, be aware that a bicyclist may be hidden from view by larger vehicles.

Generally, bicyclists when traveling less than the speed of traffic are required to ride as far as practicable to the right, with the flow of traffic. However, there are conditions where this is not the case. These include: when passing another vehicle or avoiding an obstacle or hazard, when making a left turn, and when a lane is too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to travel safely side by side within that lane.

Note: The majority of traffic lanes are not wide enough to be safely shared.

In Florida a person over 21 years of age may operate or ride upon a motorcycle without wearing protective headgear securely fastened upon his or her head if such person is covered by an insurance policy providing for at least \$10,000 in medical benefits for injuries incurred as a result of a crash while operating or riding on a motorcycle. Operators 21 and under must wear a DOT approved helmet. All operators must wear eye protection.

Motorcycles are often difficult to see as they approach you from the opposing direction or from the side. Motorcycles can accelerate very quickly and can make extremely fast maneuvers. When sharing the road with a motorcycle, the first thing you need to know is that they are there. Motorcycles can over take you quickly from behind. Search for motorcycles at all times, especially before changing lanes, turning, or passing.

It is the law that motorcycles must always be operated with their headlight on - even during the day. Scan your mirrors for the presence of an approaching motorcycle by looking for the single headlight. You might hear it before you see it.

Because motorcycles are small, it is more difficult to judge their speed. Before changing lanes or maneuvering your vehicle, check the speed of the motorcycle. Be sure you and the motorcycle are not about to merge into the same space. Motorcycles have small or sometimes no mirrors. If you are behind or to the side, do not assume the motorcyclist sees you.

Motorcycles take up a small amount of space in the lane, but they need every bit of the lane in case they need to make an evasive maneuver. Anticipate sudden movements, swerving, and quick lane changes without signals.

Motorists need to be aware of how their actions can impact the safety of motorcyclists and learn to share the road safely with motorcyclists. A large portion of motorcycle crashes involve two key components: poor speed and spatial judgment of other drivers and the inability of motorcyclists to be seen due to dark clothing and lack of reflective material. If you ride a motorcycle remember to wear reflective clothing so you can be seen by other riders and drivers.

Here are some safety tips for motorists:

- Search the traffic around you constantly and expect to see motorcycles.
- Check your blind spots before changing lanes or merging, especially in heavy traffic.
- Double check traffic at intersections before you turn or pull out.
- Motorcycles can easily be hidden in traffic. Look for a helmet above, tires below, or a shadow alongside a vehicle that you can't see around.
- Leave at least a four-second distance between your car and a motorcycle in front of you. Note when a motorcycle passes a point in the road. If your vehicle passes the same point in less than four seconds, you're following too closely.
- When passing a motorcycle, give a full lane to the motorcycle. Do not share lanes!

Some more useful safety tips include:

- Keep a watchful eye at all times. Individual motorcycles may blend into a larger group and may be closer than you think.
- Watch out when turning left because most crashes between cars and motorcycles occur involve left turns at intersections.
- Stay attentive and focused because distracted driving is a major cause of car-motorcycle crashes.
- Make sure to always signal when changing lanes to ensure the motorcycle rider knows what action you intend to take.
- Remember that failing to yield right of way can result in the death or serious injury of a motorcyclist.
- Make sure to observe and obey all traffic laws, signs, and signals.

Public Transit buses make frequent stops that delay traffic, often in the right lane. They often block your view of cross traffic and of passengers getting on and off the bus.

If you see a bus on its route ahead of your vehicle, change lanes well in advance to avoid its frequent stops. If traffic is congested, be patient and stop behind the bus' rear no-zone. Allow the passengers on board the bus to disembark and make their way safely to the sidewalk.

As a school bus approaches a stop, it will initially flash amber warning lights. As it slows it will begin to flash red warning lights. When it comes to a complete stop, it will display red stop signs and flashing red lights. When you approach an oncoming school bus on an undivided roadway, be prepared to stop. When you see the flashing red lights, stop before reaching the bus zone and wait for the bus to unload or load. Proceed only after the bus driver turns off the red flashing lights. Be patient if you find yourself behind a school bus that makes frequent stops, even though it may delay your travel time. Never pass a school bus if red lights are flashing.

In Florida any person using, operating, or driving a vehicle on or over the roads or highways of this state shall, upon approaching any school bus which displays a stop signal, bring such vehicle to a full stop while the bus is stopped, and the vehicle shall not pass the school bus until the signal has been withdrawn.

Any person using, operating, or driving a vehicle that passes a school bus on the side that children enter and exit when the school bus displays a stop signal commits a moving violation.

The driver of a vehicle upon a divided highway with an unpaved space of at least 5 feet, a raised median, or a physical barrier is not required to stop when traveling in the opposite direction of a school bus which is stopped.

The driver of a vehicle upon any undivided highway or a divided highway without physical barrier, raised median, or at least 5 feet between lanes is required to stop when traveling in the opposite direction of a school bus when it stops. Search for small children and other pedestrians around school buses prior to the bus stopping and after it departs. Children frequently make sudden moves, so be extra cautious around schools and school buses.

The "Move Over Law", which was passed in 2002, requires all motorists approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with lights flashing to change lanes away from the emergency vehicle if traveling on a multi-lane roadway and if able to do so safely. If the driver is unable to move over or is traveling on a two-lane roadway, the driver is required to slow to a speed that is 20 miles per hour less than the posted speed limit when the posted speed limit is 25 miles per hour or greater; or travel at five miles per hour when the posted speed limit is 20 miles per hour or less.

Florida leads the country in pedestrian deaths in 2009 with 466. Pedestrians often enter an intersection before it is safe, or they dash across the street when they are in a hurry. Even though they might know better, it is your responsibility as a vehicle operator to yield the right of way to them.

Be aware that drivers in Florida are now required to stop for pedestrians: "The driver of a vehicle at any crosswalk where a sign so indicates shall stop and remain stopped to allow a pedestrian to cross a roadway when the pedestrian is in the crosswalk or steps into the crosswalk and is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger."

In bad weather, watch for pedestrians who unexpectedly cross your path when they are trying to get out of the cold or stay dry in a rain storm. Watch out for the unpredictable pedestrian with an umbrella; it is likely that they can see no more than their feet as they shield themselves from the weather. They cannot see you - compensate for their unpredictable actions, slow down, and yield the right-of-way.

Elderly, handicapped, or blind pedestrians with a white cane or guide dog might move slowly through intersections. Be patient and courteous as you wait for them to cross; do not honk your horn or shout at them. When a pedestrian guided by a dog guide or carrying in a raised or extended position a white cane, an approaching driver is obliged to bringing the vehicle to a full stop.)

On roads without sidewalks, pedestrians are supposed to walk along the left side of the road facing traffic. This is a law designed for road users to "see and be seen". If you see a pedestrian along the side of the road, slow down and increase the space between your vehicle and the edge of the road if possible.

As a driver, you become a pedestrian as soon as you exit your vehicle. Remember other drivers might not see you; you should anticipate that they might not extend you the proper courtesy. You have just become more vulnerable! Use extra caution walking behind parked vehicles. Do not walk close to the rear of parked vehicles; and walk away from parked vehicles to better be seen by motorists about to back up.

When backing out of a driveway, watch for children playing near or behind the vehicle and on sidewalks. Always be aware of pedestrians when backing out of a parking space. It is a good practice to walk around your vehicle before backing to ensure children are not playing in the area.

Pedestrian and school zones signs exist on the roadway to warn drivers of an approaching crosswalk and the actual crosswalk itself. When you see lines representing a crosswalk with a new fluorescent yellow-green diamond-shaped sign or the five-sided sign shaped like a house, its purpose is to warn drivers of a pedestrian crossing or school crossing.

Also new to our traffic environment are pedestrian refuge islands. They are in place for the safety of a pedestrian who cannot get across the street in sufficient time before the signal changes or at a midblock crosswalk. When making a right turn in a free flow right turn lane as pictured to the right, be prepared to yield or stop for pedestrians attempting to cross. This requires looking not just to the left for a gap in traffic, but ahead for the possibility of a pedestrian crossing.

Here are some pedestrian laws that you should be aware of:

A driver at any crosswalk where a sign so indicates, shall stop and remain stopped to allow a pedestrian to cross a roadway when the pedestrian is in the crosswalk or steps into the crosswalk and is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.

When traffic control signals are not in place or in operation and no sign indicated otherwise, the driver shall yield, slowing down or stopping if need be, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.

A pedestrian who sets foot in a (marked or unmarked) crosswalk where traffic signals are not in place, or are not operating, obliges an approaching driver to yield the right of way, so long as it is feasible for the driver to do so. The driver's duty to yield applies regardless of whether the crossing location is controlled by any signs (Stop or Yield). Yielding may take the form of slowing or stopping; safe yielding requires stopping (and waiting) if the crossing pedestrian is in the driver's lane, in the lane into which the driver is turning, or in an adjoining lane.

When a vehicle is stopped at a crosswalk to permit a pedestrian to cross the roadway, the driver of any other vehicle approaching from the rear shall not overtake and pass such stopped vehicle.

Pedestrian countdown signals give pedestrians a gauge on how long they have to cross a signalized intersection before cross traffic receives a green light. These signals also benefit drivers, who can now see how long they have before their green light will change, giving us a heads up on whether to maintain speed or slow down as we approach the intersection.

Animal-vehicle collisions can happen any time of year, but autumn is the peak season for deer-car collisions. Animals are unpredictable and easily startled. Encountering animals on the road can be dangerous whether it is a herd of cows, a single horse and rider, or a wandering pet.

When you are driving on rural roads, be aware that you may also encounter livestock at any time. Watch for livestock if you see broken fences or open farm gates. Scan for animals on the road or roadside by reducing your speed and being ready to stop. Do not sound your horn or rev your engine.

Let's see if we can remember some important points. You will now be asked some review questions based on this CBT. You may select your answer by choosing the corresponding button or by pressing the corresponding letter on your keyboard.

1. If the driver is unable to move over or is traveling on a two-lane roadway, the driver is required to slow to a speed that is ___ miles per hour less than the posted speed limit when the posted speed limit is ___ miles per hour or greater.
 - a. 35 – 40
 - b. 30 – 35
 - c. 25 – 30
 - d. 20 – 25

The answer is d. 20 – 25.

2. Florida ranked _____ in the country in pedestrian deaths in 2009 with 466.
 - a. first
 - b. fourth
 - c. seventh
 - d. tenth

The answer is a. first.

3. A large portion of motorcycle crashes involve two key components:
 - a. wet roads and wind
 - b. inattention and alcohol
 - c. poor speed and spatial judgment
 - d. None of the answers is correct

The answer is c. poor speed and spatial judgment.

And now let's review the lesson.

We share the roadway with many other road users. This module covered considerations, cautions, and laws you need to remember every time you operate a vehicle. Remember to yield the right of way and try to anticipate what actions others might take that could cause you problems.

The next module presents information on defensive driving as you approach and travel through intersections. This concludes the module on sharing the road.