



PREVENTING REAR-END COLLISIONS

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Rear end collisions are one of the most common types of vehicle accidents. Most rear-end accidents are caused by drivers following too closely to the vehicle in front of them. Other factors (reading a map, dialing a cell phone, or using the radio) also play a role in rear end accidents. These accidents can result in property damage, injuries, and human suffering.

Drivers sometimes follow too closely because they equate stopping distance with the vehicle's braking distance. In reality, stopping distance is much further. Stopping distance includes perception distance (distance traveled while operator recognizes the need to break), reaction distance (distance traveled before the brakes are applied), and braking distance. A driver traveling at 65 mph will travel almost two thirds of a football field before they apply the brakes if their perception and reaction time is two seconds. Of course, a distracted driver will travel further.

Fortunately, most rear end collisions can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines:

- **Three second rule:** Always leave **at least** three seconds following distance between yourself and the vehicle in front of you. To determine this distance, first select a fixed object on the road ahead such as a sign, tree or overpass. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the object, slowly count "one one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand." If you reach the object before completing the count, you are following too closely. If you are driving a truck, at night, or in adverse conditions (rain, fog), add at least one second to your following distance.
- **Look far forward and keep your eyes moving:** Look 1/5 mile down the road and scan the horizon. You will recognize traffic problems sooner and remain aware of immediate hazards.
- **Avoid distractions:** Do not read, eat, drink, or apply makeup while driving. Pull over to the side of the road to place or receive cell phone calls.
- **Yield to tailgaters:** If a driver is following too closely, move one lane to the right and let him/her pass.