



10 MINUTE TRAINING TOPIC

Improper Lane Change

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Summary

- Statistics
- Overview; Five main causes of Improper Lane Change:
 - Weaving in and out of traffic
 - Last second lane change
 - Inefficient mirror use
 - Unintended lane change
 - Not signaling
 - What NOT to do when changing lanes
- Summary



Statistics

- **9-percent of all accidents in the United States are caused by reckless lane changes.** A lot of these accidents are caused by motorcyclists.
- Almost 35,000 people are injured per year in the United States from unsafe lane changes.
- Close to 6,000 people die per year in the United States from unsafe lane changes.



Overview

Drivers who perform unsafe lane changes put everyone around them at risk. These are some of the most dangerous maneuvers drivers make when changing lanes:

- Failure to use turn signals before changing lanes.
- Changing lanes without checking surrounding traffic for cars. This can involve not checking a rearview mirror or blind spot.
- Crossing multiple lanes at once.
- Not staying in one's lane. Drivers can swerve or partially drift into another lane for several reasons. They may be distracted by their phones, feel sleepy, or be driving under the influence.
- An improper merge onto the highway.
- Changing lanes in the middle of an intersection.
- Two vehicles trying to enter the same lane simultaneously.
- The following slides review the top 5 causes of Improper Lane Changes.

Weaving in and out of traffic

This can be due to the misconception that rushing will save lots of time. These dangerous drivers are always seeking the faster moving lane or the gaps in traffic that will allow their unimpeded progress. They are usually travelling faster than the majority of traffic due to their impatience. The increased number of lane changes increases the chances of something going drastically wrong.

Solution: Driving on our roads is not a competition. Avoid allowing yourself to fall victim to “Road Rush”. Racing to get from point A to point B in heavy traffic as fast as possible only greatly increases driver stress as well as the odds of collision, while accomplishing very little time saving.



Last second lane change

This shows a lack of situational awareness by the driver. They are caught off guard and surprised by their driving environment. Motorists who are not focused on their driving environment often find themselves rushing up behind a slower vehicle or a stopped lane of traffic. To avoid this delay or at least the heavy braking, they attempt a last second lane change and often miss vital traffic information about other vehicles in their immediate proximity.

Solution: Focus on your driving so you can plan lane changes well in advance. Analyze the traffic flow around you and when and where other traffic will likely merge in. This gives you plenty of time to check traffic around you and make a clear signal. You can now make a smooth transition from one lane to the next and avoid the jerky swerve that can send you out of control or into the side of another vehicle. Drivers should stay focused and not allow distractions to prevent processing of critical driving information.

Inefficient mirror use

Most drivers do not set their mirrors in such a way to afford them the best view around their vehicle while minimizing or eliminating the blind spots. Even if they do, most drivers will not check their mirrors often enough. Driving experts are teaching the better way to adjust mirrors to eliminate the blind spot.

Solution: Set your side view mirrors so that you see more of the lane beside you rather than the side of your own vehicle. The most common way drivers adjust their side view mirrors is so they can see a little of the side of their own vehicle. However, you need to know if a vehicle is beside you in your “blind spot” rather than seeing the side of your own vehicle. Drivers should check their mirrors more often. A scan of all mirrors should happen every five to eight seconds. Good motorists keep their vision high and every few seconds they will glance from the rear view to the side view mirrors and then return to far up the road. It is vital to know where all vehicles are located around you at all times.

Unintended lane change

These range from drivers being distracted by cell phones, conversations, changing radio stations, picking up articles in the vehicle, staring at collisions or other visual distractions, fatigue and impairment. In this situation the driver does not intend to change lanes or may not even be aware they are changing lanes.

Solution: To avoid experiencing any unplanned lane changes, do not allow yourself to be distracted by anything that is not traffic related. Look to where you want to go as you will drive to where you are looking. Do not drive if you are impaired or tired.



Not signaling

Surprising other motorists with your lane change can lead to abrupt reactions that can cause loss of control. When two motorists try to occupy the same lane real estate, not signaling that intention can lead to confusion or collision.

Solution: Use the turn signal for all your lane changes. It is in your best interest to let every driver around you know what you plan to do next. Motorists need at least two or three flashes from the turn signal to grasp the intent from the signaling driver. Another two or three flashes will confirm the lane change occurring. In other words, each turn or lane change signal should be comprised of a minimum of four flashes from the turn signal lights. That last second one-flash of the turn signal halfway through a lane change that many motorists do acts only as a confirmation of what the other motorists already know. Drivers should also keep in mind using your turn signal does not give you the right of way. Lane changes and turns can only be completed when it is safe to do so.

What NOT to do when changing lanes

- Ask yourself - Is it legal, is it safe, is it necessary?“
- The presence of a solid white line lane divider indicates that lane changes are prohibited.
- Do not cross more than 1 lane at a time. If you need to cross multiple lanes, do it one-by-one and check carefully prior to each lane change.
- Don't change lanes in or near an intersection. Remember that spending a few seconds behind another vehicle is often safer than going around it.
- Don't cut into the way of other drivers. Be extra cautious when sharing the road with heavy vehicles and in adverse weather conditions.
- Don't neglect to use your turn indicators when changing lanes.
- Using your turn indicator does not mean it is safe to change lanes. Give the proper signal and look to make sure the move can be made safely.
- Don't do last second lane changes or exits. Plan your moves in time!

Summary

- Changing lanes without thoughtfulness is not only a threat to the safety of all road users but has often been the source of much frustration. Unsafe and inconsiderate lane changes are bad and considered inconsiderate driving. It can be dangerous, and can trigger road rage in some drivers, leading to arguments and aggressive driving.
- Lane changes can become quite frightening when both vehicles are traveling at higher rates of speed.
- The safety-minded driver always communicates with other motorists by using the turn signal well ahead of time (at least eight to ten seconds) before changing lanes.
- Also start your signal before you begin the maneuver so that other motorists have time to recognize your signal.
- Lastly, it is each driver's responsibility to make a safe lane change by using proficient vision techniques, staying focused on driving, setting and using your mirrors efficiently and communicating your lane change in advance. By doing so, you can avoid becoming another traffic statistic.