

Check Before You Wreck

Failure to yield, rear-ending another vehicle, and sideswiping a parked car are all examples of claims we see that may be the result of aggressive driving, one of the leading causes of automobile accidents today.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggests you ask yourself and your employees the following questions about driving behavior. Do you:

- **Express frustration?** Taking out your frustration on your fellow motorist can lead to violence or a crash.
- **Fail to pay attention when driving?** Reading, eating, drinking, or talking on the phone can cause crashes.
- **Tailgate?** Following too closely is a major cause of crashes that can result in serious injuries or death.
- **Make frequent lane changes?** If you whip in and out of lanes, you can be a danger to other motorists.
- **Run red lights?** Don't enter an intersection on a yellow light. Treat a flashing red light as a stop sign.
- **Speed?** If you're going faster than the posted speed limit, "road racing," or going too fast for conditions, you're speeding.

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you too might be an aggressive driver. Try following these recommendations.

- **Plan ahead:** Allow yourself extra time.
- **Concentrate:** Don't get distracted by talking on your cell phone, eating, or drinking.
- **Relax:** Tune the radio to your favorite relaxing music. Be sure to sit up straight so you don't relax too much.
- **Drive the posted speed limit:** Fewer crashes occur when vehicles are traveling at or about the same speed.
- **Identify alternative routes:** Even if an alternate route looks longer, it may be less congested.
- **Just be late:** If all else fails, just be late. When confronted with aggressive drivers:
- **Get out of the way:** First and foremost, make every attempt to get out of their way.
- **Put your pride aside:** Don't challenge aggressive drivers by speeding up or refusing to let them into your lane.
- **Avoid eye contact:** Eye contact can sometimes enrage an aggressive driver.
- **Don't gesture:** Ignore gestures and refuse to return them.
- **Report serious aggressive driving:** You or a passenger may call the police. If you use a cell phone, pull over to a safe location.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.