



**TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY INSTITUTE**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STARTS

DRIVER TRAINING

PROGRAM

DRIVER'S SAFETY MANUAL

Sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration,
Office of Safety, in Cooperation with the
Rural Transit Assistance Program

**SPECIAL TRANSIT AND RURAL TRANSIT
DRIVER'S SAFETY MANUAL**

Developed and Prepared

by

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Sponsored by

**URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION, OFFICE OF SAFETY
IN COOPERATION WITH THE
RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

First Print: JULY 1988

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SPECIAL TRANSIT AND RURAL TRANSIT

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FOREWORD AND INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

Welcome to the Special Transit and Rural Transit Safety (STARTS) Program. This is a technical guidance service of the Transportation Safety Institute (TSI) of the United States Department of Transportation and is sponsored by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration Office of Safety in cooperation with the Rural Transit Assistance Program.

This driver training program was developed with the assistance and guidance of transit system operators in various regions of the United States. The program consists of three modules: Vehicle Safety Inspection, Driver Sensitivity and Passenger Relations, and Defensive and Safe Driving Procedures. The modules are designed to be presented in the order as stated above. Each module begins with a slide/tape presentation and ends with you demonstrating appropriate skills to earn a certificate.

Vehicle Safety Inspections is designed to address recommended procedures for conducting safety inspections of vehicles commonly used in special transit and rural transit systems. The type of vehicles you normally drive may or may not be shown in the slide/tape presentation. However, inspection procedures are basically the same for all vehicles and only minor adjustments should be necessary when using the procedures. To earn your certificate, you will be expected to satisfactorily demonstrate a pre-trip safety inspection of a vehicle you drive. After all, safety inspections should be part of your workday routine. No one is expected to remember all the details all the time. That is why we hope you will use and rely on the checklist you will receive.

Driver Sensitivity and Passenger Relations is designed to address recommended procedures for dealing with the passengers that ride on special transit and rural transit systems. While this presentation covers many different categories of passengers, no presentation can cover all types of passenger needs and problems. Regardless of the type of passengers you carry, this program will help you in doing your job professionally. Passenger relations should be part of your daily routine and, with practice, you can develop and use the techniques that make you a professional driver who is more sensitive to the needs and problems of passengers. After viewing the slide/tape presentation, you will receive your certificate after satisfactorily answering a series of questions on the slide/tape presentation and locally unique passenger situations.

Defensive and Safe Driving Procedures deals with recommended procedures for defensive and safe driving of special transit and rural transit vehicles. The procedures stress that both the driver and the vehicle are equipped with defensive driving tools and the driver can utilize those tools by developing certain driving skills. A combination of driver skills and vehicle defensive driving tools will make you a safe driver. To earn your certificate after viewing the slide/tape presentation, you will be expected to demonstrate your defensive driving ability to a designated person using a Road Training Guidelines Manual.

This driver training program stresses three critical and essential points. They are PROFESSIONALISM, COMMON SENSE, and SAFE TRANSPORTATION.

PROFESSIONALISM is important because PROFESSIONALISM IS THE KEY to any successful program. A driver demonstrates professionalism by conducting thorough vehicle safety inspections. The inspections not only create an awareness of your vehicle's safety status but also assist in maintaining a good safety record for you and your company. Safety inspections can be efficient and less time consuming by using a good checklist. A driver demonstrates professionalism by dealing with the passengers in a patient and courteous manner. Such treatment makes the passengers feel safer and more secure when they ride on your vehicle. Professionalism is even further demonstrated when you use defensive and safe driving procedures.

COMMON SENSE is vital since no presentations can cover all possible situations that can be encountered during vehicle inspections and relationships with special transit passengers. Common sense is important for defensive drivers since they must drive under the assumption that other drivers don't use common sense and not all potentially dangerous situations can be addressed in a single training program.

SAFE TRANSPORTATION is our goal. While it is important to efficiently move people from one point to another, it is more important to move them safely. Before even thinking of loading passengers into vehicles, it is important to make sure that the vehicle is as safe as possible before starting out by conducting a good vehicle safety inspection. Through the practice of good passenger relations, it is possible to solicit cooperation from passengers under the most difficult conditions. Passenger cooperation makes a driver's job easier and can help make the trips safer. Of course, good defensive driving techniques reduce accidents and make transportation safer. Remember, SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT!

This manual is yours to keep and it is hoped that you will refer to it often and review all the techniques from time to time. It is our sincere desire that this manual will help you maintain a professional attitude and make your job easier as a driver of special transit and rural transit vehicles.

CHAPTER I - VEHICLE SAFETY INSPECTION

CONDUCTING THE INSPECTION

Before you begin, you should have a copy of the checklist in hand and something to write with such as a pencil or pen. The checklist will help you in performing the inspection in a logical sequence and assist you in doing a complete and thorough inspection of the vehicle. If your vehicle does not contain all of the equipment that is reflected on the checklist, simply cross out the parts that don't apply and move on to the next item.

1. Lights, Dials, and Gauges

Once you get behind the wheel, set the emergency brake, start the vehicle, and check the appropriate lights, dials, and gauges. For example, the oil gauge or warning light should give you an indication whether or not the oil pressure is sufficient to keep the engine running without damaging it. Do not allow the engine to "race" when you first start it. If the engine seems to be running too fast and won't slow down, do not put it in gear. Shut it off and report the problem to your supervisor.

If the alternator or generator light stays on or if there is a gauge that tells you that the battery is not charging, you could end up with a dead battery on the route. If you do get such an indication, you should have it corrected before starting out.

2. Windows and Mirrors

Make sure that all windows and mirrors are free of ice, snow, or frost before moving the vehicle. If it is not too cold outside, you can check to see that the windshield washer and wipers are working properly.

Adjust all of your mirrors to make sure that you can see what it is you need to see within your safety zone. Your safety zone is explained in greater detail in another presentation.

3. Horn, Steering Wheel, and Brakes

Tap the horn to make sure it works. It is a good defensive driving tool.

Move the steering wheel from side to side to make sure it is not loose or that it does not have excessive "play" in it.

Push in on the brake pedal. It shouldn't feel soft or spongy.

4. "Go" or "No Go" Criteria

You should have a working knowledge of vehicle codes and company rules concerning which equipment is vital to safe operations. If you take faulty equipment on the road, you could be asking for a breakdown or accident. If you are not sure or not satisfied about the condition of the vehicle, check with your supervisor before going on the road.

5. Heat and/or Air Conditioner-Defroster

Turn on the heater/defroster/air conditioner fan(s) to make sure they are working. They can be a great help to you in making your trip and passengers safe and comfortable.

6. Interior Lights and Signs

Turn on and check all of your interior lights and signs. While you may not need your interior lights now, you may need them on the road for a variety of reasons.

7. Emergency Equipment

Check all of your emergency equipment to make sure it is in place. Make sure the first aid kit (if you have one) is completely stocked and that the fire extinguisher is charged. Also make sure that all emergency equipment is properly stowed so that it does not become missiles in an accident.

8. Vehicle Sanitation and Good Housekeeping

Check throughout the vehicle to make sure it is free from trash, bottles, cans, tobacco products and other forms of debris. A vehicle free from trash and debris is not only a cleaner vehicle but it is a safer vehicle. A clean interior helps prevent falls and related accidents, as well as fires.

9. Wheelchair Equipment

If your vehicle is equipped with wheelchair tie-down and restraint equipment, check it to make sure it is operational and not worn excessively. Remember, this equipment may have to restrain several hundred pounds during an emergency braking situation.

10. Lifts and Ramps

Run all lifts through at least one complete cycle to make sure they are working. Also check your ramps for cleanliness and make sure they are secured while the vehicle is in motion. Checking lifts and ramps may require you to move the vehicle to gain sufficient room along side or behind your vehicle.

11. Doors and Emergency Exits

Examine all regular and emergency doors to make sure they are functional and not obstructed or otherwise damaged. The time to find out an emergency door doesn't work is before you put the vehicle in regular service.

12. Left Front

Turn on all the exterior lights, including the high beams and emergency flashers. Make sure the emergency brake is on and get out and check the left front vehicle lights to make sure they are clean and not burned out. As you begin this outside inspection, remember to note any fresh or new damage to the vehicle.

13. Left Side Tires

Look at the left front and left rear tires for signs of damage or obvious pressure problems. An overinflated tire will give a rougher ride and an underinflated tire will build up heat and make it more susceptible to damage from obstacles or chuckholes in the road.

14. Rear Lights and Signs

Inspect all lights on the rear of the vehicle such as the emergency flashers, tail lights, etc. If you have any signs on the back of the vehicle, make sure they are clean. If the lights are dirty, take a rag or paper towel and clean them. They not only signal your intentions, but they make your vehicle easier to see.

15. Under-Vehicle Inspection

Stand back a few feet from the rear of the vehicle and look under the vehicle for any foreign objects or fluid leaks. If there are any objects hanging or wedged under the vehicle, either remove the objects or determine if part of the vehicle is hanging down. If part of the vehicle is hanging down, report it to your supervisor for repair before starting your run. If you see any puddles of any kind other than obvious rain water or water from melted snow or ice, check the source of the leak and report it to your supervisor. The puddle could be anything from oil or transmission fluid to gasoline or brake fluid.

16. Right Side Tires

Now check the right rear and right front tires just as you did the left side tires. As you walk up the right side of the vehicle, look for any signs of fresh vehicle damage. Also, check the cleanliness of any signs you may have on the right side of the vehicle.

17. Right Front Lights

Inspect all the right front lights just as you did the left front lights. Make sure they all work and are clean.

AT THIS POINT, YOU HAVE ARRIVED BACK AT THE FRONT OF YOUR VEHICLE, WHICH IS THE SAME PLACE YOU STARTED YOUR OUTSIDE INSPECTION A FEW MINUTES AGO. YOU WERE VERY THOROUGH AND IT REALLY DIDN'T TAKE LONG!

Now that you are ready to start your run, be sure to fasten your seat belt. If anything should go wrong with your vehicle during the run, be sure to report it to your supervisor so that it can be repaired before the next run. It is also a good idea to do a quick inspection of the vehicle after your shift to make sure that all the lights and other equipment are functioning properly.

CHAPTER II - PASSENGER RELATIONS AND DRIVER SENSITIVITY

PASSENGER RELATIONS AND DRIVER SENSITIVITY

1. Driver's Personal Appearance and Hygiene

Many riders judge a transit system as much by the driver's personal appearance as they do by the quality of the transportation service. As a driver, your personal appearance and grooming should present a professional image. Whether you wear a uniform or just street clothes, your wearing apparel should be clean and in order. Some wrinkles or dust may be inevitable but you shouldn't look like you slept in your clothes! You should also take reasonable efforts to keep your hair combed and avoid unpleasant body odors or bad breath. Of course, passengers that don't practice good grooming and personal hygiene still expect you to do it because they consider you to be a professional.

2. Driver Attitude and Demeanor

Your attitude may very well determine just how pleasant, or unpleasant, a passenger's ride is going to be. Even though some passengers don't always show it, a nice smile and a pleasant "hello" or other friendly greeting is appreciated. It's possible that passengers have had a terrible day until they board your vehicle and you have the opportunity to be their first pleasant experience of the day.

3. Collecting Fares

If you collect fares from your passengers, you will need to practice some special passenger handling techniques. First and important is that you be fully aware of your company's policy regarding fare collection. If a passenger has a problem finding the fare (or a pass), ask him or her to step aside and look for the fare so that other passengers aren't stranded outside in the heat, cold, rain, snow, or wind. Patience in fare collection is important because some passengers have major problems remembering where they put their money or passes. If you become impatient with passengers, they usually become frustrated or angry. Such a situation can quickly lead to embarrassment for you and them. Remember, patience demonstrates PROFESSIONALISM.

If a passenger can't find money or a pass after a reasonable period of time, you should know what your company's policy is in such matters. Usually, giving the passenger the benefit of the doubt the first time is acceptable. Some passengers will even pay twice on the next trip when given the benefit of the doubt. If, on the other hand, you suspect that someone is truly trying to steal a ride and cheat the system, the company policy should be clearly stated so that passengers know what options they have to alleviate the situation.

4. Passenger Complaints

While some passenger complaints are justified, it is important that ALL complaints be handled in a professional manner. Even if you as a driver cannot do anything about the complaints, it is imperative that you always remain courteous and polite. Even if you are right, you will not solve anything by arguing with a passenger. If you let passenger remarks escalate into a confrontation, you could end up having an accident down the road due to the stress created by the confrontation. Human nature may prompt you to verbally retaliate to rude remarks and comments but COMMON SENSE should dictate that safe driving is more important than getting in the last word.

5. Eating or Drinking on the Vehicle

For safety reasons, neither you or your passengers should eat or drink on the vehicle when it is in service. In some states, consumption of food and drink on transit vehicles is against the law. Even when it is not against the law, consumption of food and drink could be dangerous. If any food or drink gets spilled on the vehicle, it could cause someone to get burned or wet and it could cause a passenger (or you) to slip and fall. If a passenger attempts to bring food or drink aboard for consumption on your vehicle, you have three options that can assist you in solving the problem. They are:

- a. Ask them to cover the drinks and wrap the food so it can be consumed after they disembark.

or

- b. Ask them to either throw the food away or disembark, consume the food and drink, and then wait for the next run.

or

- c. Deny service and refuse to board them while they have food and drink.

Now, let's review the three options and some of the possible repercussions. Option number one is to ask the passengers to cover the drinks and wrap the food for consumption after they disembark. This is probably the most viable solution to the problem. A visible sign clearly stating the company policy or rules in such matters would be of great assistance in exercising this option. Option number two is to either ask them to throw the food away prior to boarding, or disembark, eat the food, and wait for the next run. The suggestion to throw the food and drink away may be met with considerable resistance due to the cost of the items. Asking them to disembark, consume the food and drink and wait for the next run may be met with resistance because the passengers may have to wait in bad weather, or the next run is several hours away, or there is no run until the next day. The third option is to deny service if they refuse to accept either of the first two options. Denying service under these circumstances can cause you and the passengers serious problems. Therefore, it is extremely important that you have a thorough understanding of your company's policy regarding such matters as the consumption or transportation of food and drink.

6. Use of Tobacco Products on the Vehicle

In most areas, smoking on transit vehicles is prohibited by law. Whether or not it is prohibited by law on your vehicles, smoking should not be allowed. It presents a health danger to passengers with respiratory problems and creates an unnecessary fire hazard. Improper use of smokeless tobacco products can result in slips and falls as well as unsanitary vehicles. Therefore, it is recommended that any use of tobacco products not be allowed on transit vehicles. It is further recommended that appropriate signs on the vehicles clearly stating the tobacco policies be prominently displayed.

7. Handling Passengers in Pain

Many elderly and/or handicapped persons must live with pain on a daily basis. Even with medication, some persons still experience considerable pain. Since people in pain may be difficult to deal with, you must be very patient with them. A comfortable ride can greatly improve a passenger's attitude. For example, passengers with arthritis can receive considerable pain every time your vehicle hits a bump or chuckhole at a higher than necessary speed. Since some road bumps cannot be avoided, you should at least slow down before hitting them. Sometimes, arthritic passengers can minimize the effect of road bumps by avoiding seats over axles and carefully selecting seats close to the middle of the vehicle.

8. Passengers with Personal Assistive Devices

Since many passengers in special and rural transit systems use personal assistive devices, there are some things about the passengers and their assistive devices that you should consider.

a. Crutches

There are underarm, forearm, and full arm crutches. Underarm crutches are usually constructed of wood or aluminum and are generally used for temporary disablements such as sprains and fractures. Usually if the disablement is more of a permanent nature, the crutch will be made of metal and designed to aid the user or completely support the user. Passengers who use crutches will usually have difficulty in achieving and maintaining their balance in standing and walking. Never attempt to assist passengers with crutches unless you advise them first. Remember, balance is already a problem for them and if you approach them unannounced, you could cause them to fall.

b. Canes

Passengers use canes for two purposes. Most canes are used to assist the passenger in standing and walking. However, white canes are used by the blind as "feelers" and generally not relied upon as a means of physical support. Canes and other personal assistive devices should be stored so that they do not interfere with any movement inside the vehicle. Passengers who use canes for balance usually require minimal assistance from the driver. If you find it necessary to assist such a passenger, do so from the side opposite the cane.

c. Walkers

Most people who use walkers do so as a substitute for crutches. Walkers tend to provide a more stable base than crutches and are usually necessary for the person to move about. Most walkers collapse easily for storage. Passengers using walkers may have a tendency to fall backwards and may need assistance in sitting down or standing up.

d. Braces and Artificial Limbs

There are two basic types of leg braces. One is a brace for the ankle which does not extend above the knee and keeps the wearer from dragging the toe. The other type, the knee brace, may be worn for the ankle and/or the knee and extend almost to the hip. It is designed to keep the wearer's knee locked for standing and walking. Passengers with braces will need more room to maneuver while trying to sit or stand. Brace wearers may also have a problem with balance.

Passengers with an arm prosthesis, or artificial arm, do not usually have a mobility problem because of the prosthesis. However, they may have problems paying fares, fastening seat belts, and holding on or maintaining balance.

Passengers with artificial legs will have mobility that is dependent on the level of amputation. For example, an amputee with one or both legs off below the knee generally will have few problems in walking with properly fitting prosthesis. Amputees with legs missing above the knee may require hand rails for stability when walking. They will also be slower using stairs or ramps. An important point to remember about passengers with artificial legs is that their ability to walk well diminishes with the aging process.

Remember, amputees are missing some of the skin area through which the body dissipates heat. Accordingly, they may experience problems staying cool in hot weather.

9. Blind and Visually Impaired Passengers

There are about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ million legally blind persons and over 5 million visually impaired persons in the United States. Persons considered to be legally blind may carry one of two types of white canes. The white canes are generally not used as support but assist the blind in feeling their way. One cane is a rigid type while the other kind folds up for storage while the passenger is seated. Some simple but important techniques to use with blind and sight impaired passengers are:

- a. When picking them up use your horn to announce your arrival at the pickup point.
- b. If you must escort or lead the passenger to your vehicle, you should:
 - (1) Remain on the side opposite the white cane and have them hold your arm.

- (2) Don't touch the passenger until you tell them who you are and what you intend to do.
- (3) Have them walk next to you and you should lead them by about half a step or half a pace. This way, if you forget to tell them the direction of travel or distance up or down (such as 6 inches, 8 inches, one foot, etc.), they will still be able to follow your lead by holding your arm.
- (4) If you must escort them through a narrow space, tell them ahead of time and drop your arm back so that they can walk almost directly behind you.
- (5) Call out all turns or other maneuvers well in advance, at least 20 feet.
- (6) Be sure to advise them of any changes, such as hard to soft ground or small steps to large steps.
- (7) You must be absolutely sure that the stop command will be immediately obeyed by the blind person during the escorting process. You may not have time to explain the potential hazard before giving the stop command.
- (8) Before boarding the blind, take their hand and show them the top, bottom, and sides of the door opening as well as the seat and any possible hazards between the door and the seat.
- (9) If it is necessary to store a blind person's cane that cannot be folded, tell the person before you touch the cane and explain what you are going to do and why.
- (10) If the blind passenger uses a guide dog, it may be helpful for you to learn the name of the dog for future reference. While most guide dogs usually have a gentle nature, you should still avoid any sudden or abrupt movements toward the dog or the blind person.
- (11) When possible, visually impaired or blind persons should be seated against vehicle walls or in seats with arm rests. This helps them avoid falls during sudden vehicle movements, such as emergency braking or swerving of the vehicle.
- (12) Since most blind persons usually have an exceptional sense of hearing, it is probably not necessary to shout when communicating with them.
- (13) When possible, advise blind or visually impaired passengers about upcoming road problems such as chuckholes or railroad tracks.

10. Deaf/Hearing Impaired Passengers

There are over 14,000,000 people in the United States that suffer from deafness or a significant hearing loss. While some passengers rely on hearing aids, you should remember that hearing aids amplify all noises, not just voices. Most deaf or hearing impaired passengers will communicate by lip reading with an oral response or by use of hand signs and finger spelling.

a. When communicating with deaf passengers that read lips, you should:

- (1) Look directly at them so they can see your lips.
- (2) Talk normally and don't exaggerate your speech or lip movements. (Note: accents, such as draws, do not normally affect lip reading.)
- (3) Speak with moderate speed, don't rush your words.
- (4) Be prepared to repeat yourself. Even expert lip readers will only understand about 75 percent of what you say the first time.
- (5) Get another person to talk to them if the lip reader has trouble reading your lips.

b. When communicating with persons using hand signals and finger spelling, you should:

- (1) Remember that it takes practice to become skillful in using hand signals and finger spelling.
- (2) Use a pad and pencil when necessary.
- (3) Keep your messages as clear and simple as possible.
- (4) Remember that not all deaf persons can speak well. If they have been deaf from birth, they will usually speak in a flat and nasal tone.
- (5) Never shout at a totally deaf person. They can't hear you!

11. Speech Impaired Passengers

There are many different reasons for speech impairment or total loss of speech, including cancer and stroke. When possible, keep a pad and pencil available for the speech impaired. Some techniques for dealing with the speech impaired are:

- a. Do not lead them to believe that you understood what they said if, in reality, you did not understand.
- b. If you think you understood what they said, repeat it so that they can either confirm or deny what was said.
- c. Persons with speech impairments are used to not being understood, so don't hesitate to ask them to repeat the parts you didn't understand. They will appreciate your willingness to try to understand.

- d. Be patient with them. Almost any type of speech impairment will become aggravated if the person gets frustrated or uncomfortable.

12. Mentally Retarded Passengers

About one and one-half percent of our population is classified as mentally retarded. Borderline retardation starts with individuals with an IQ of 84 to 71. As the IQ drops, the recognized level of retardation increases. Only about one-tenth of one percent of all mentally retarded are unable to provide for their basic needs. In most cases, the actual cause of retardation is unknown.

- a. When dealing with persons who have lost some part of their mental functions, the following points should be kept in mind.

- (1) They have a reduced ability to understand instructions.
- (2) They frequently suffer from a lack of orientation such as not knowing the time or where they are.
- (3) They have problems controlling their emotions and can become easily excited or agitated.
- (4) Normal rules and routines of riding in the system are difficult for them to learn and remember.

- b. When communicating with the mentally impaired, remember:

- (1) To repeat instructions frequently.
- (2) Be patient. It demonstrates PROFESSIONALISM.
- (3) Be firm, even if they insist on wanting to do something that will endanger you, them, or the other passengers.

13. Passengers in Wheelchairs

If your system transports passengers who use wheelchairs, there are several points of information and guidelines you should know. They are:

- a. Always check the grips on the push handles. They should not be loose. If they are loose, you could lose control of the chair.
- b. ALWAYS treat the wheelchair as if the brakes didn't function at all.
- c. Any time wheelchair passengers attempt to stand, sit, or transfer, the wheelchair should be prevented from moving or tipping by some means in addition to the brakes.
- d. Never lift a wheelchair by its wheels. Lifting the chair by the wheels will cause it to spin and eject the occupant or damage the chair itself.

- e. When possible, do not restrain the wheelchair and its occupant with the same belt. By using the same belt, you could bring the full weight of the chair against the passenger in an emergency stop or accident, and cause serious or even fatal injuries to the occupant.
- f. Wherever possible, place yourself on the downhill side of the chair when going up, or down curbs, steps, and ramps. This will minimize the risk of losing control of the passenger and the chair.
- g. Wear shoes with anti-slip soles to avoid any chance of slipping or falling and losing control of the chair.
- h. Use trained and qualified help in taking wheelchair passengers up or down multiple steps.
- i. Never attempt to lift a wheelchair by the foot rests when going up or down multiple steps. It takes only a minimal amount of lifting force to pull them off the chair.
- j. When negotiating a wheelchair up or down multiple steps, make sure your qualified assistant obtains a grip on the frame of the wheelchair.
- k. Before moving the chair up or down a vehicle ramp, make sure the ramp is securely attached to the vehicle.
- l. When boarding a wheelchair passenger on a lift, make sure:
 - (1) That access to the lift is clear.
 - (2) That the safety rail is securely in place.
 - (3) That the passenger's feet are clear of the toe guard flap.
 - (4) That the passenger keeps arms and hands in the lap.
 - (5) That there is sufficient room for the passenger to bend the neck to clear the top of the vehicle loading doorway. If the passenger's neck cannot be bent, the chair may have to be tilted to get safely aboard the vehicle from a lift.
 - (6) That they are boarded and then secured facing sideways or forward in the vehicle. Facing them backwards is the least desirable position and they may be more susceptible to injury in that position.
- m. Always secure a wheelchair if there is a passenger in it. Also, if you stow an empty wheelchair, make sure it is also secured from moving about, especially in an emergency braking situation or defensive maneuver.

14. Understanding Loss of Mobility

One of the reasons passengers use wheelchairs and other personal assistive devices is because they suffer from a loss of mobility. Some of the things that cause a loss of mobility are:

a. Spinal Cord Damage

This can occur from a birth defect, disease, or accident. If the accident damage to the spinal cord occurs below the neck, paralysis of the legs is the result. This is called PARAPLEGIA. If the injury is in the neck, both the arms and legs may be paralysed. This is call QUADRAPLEGIA.

b. Brain Damage

This type of damage can be caused by head injuries or stroke. Paralysis from brain damage many times results in paralysis of one side of the body, also known as HEMIPLEGIA. Hemiplegics may require assistance in movement. However, assistance should be rendered from the unaffected side. Even though one side of the body may be paralysed, the hemiplegic may still have feeling left on the affected side.

c. Loss of Muscle Control

This type of loss can be either the result of head/spinal injury or the result of multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, or cerebral palsy.

d. Damage to the Joints

Loss of mobility due to this kind of damage is most commonly caused by rheumatic diseases such as arthritis. Of the over 30 million Americans afflicted with arthritis, a quarter of a million are children. There are 70 or more different types of rheumatic diseases.

15. Passengers with Epilepsy

While most persons with epilepsy are born with it, it can also be acquired as the result of a head injury. As a driver, you need to understand what happens to epileptics if they have a seizure. There are basically three kinds of seizures you are apt to encounter as a driver. They are:

a. Psychomotor Seizure

This is characterized by seemingly inappropriate or meaningless behavior. It can last anywhere from 2-5 minutes and may occur once a week, a month, or yearly. The person suffering the seizure will not remember the episode.

b. Petit Mal Seizure

This is simply a staring spell similar to daydreaming and usually lasts only a few seconds or less than a minute. These can happen hourly. This seizure may also be followed by a grand mal seizure.

c. **Grand Mal Seizure**

This seizure is characterized by a full body spasm or convulsion. It involves violent shaking of the entire body along with temporary unconsciousness, both lasting from 2 to 5 minutes. They can occur several times a day or as infrequently as once a year or longer. Sometimes, an epileptic will experience what is called an aura which is generally followed by the seizure. The seizure can also be triggered by such things as heat, fatigue, or flickering or flashing lights. This seizure has the greatest potential for injury to the epileptic and could present a problem for the driver. The Epilepsy Foundation of America makes the following recommendations for dealing with persons suffering a grand mal seizure:

- (1) Clear the area around the person so that injuries are not incurred by rough or sharp objects.
- (2) Do not attempt to restrain the person. The seizure must run its course.
- (3) Contrary to some opinions, don't force anything between the epileptic's teeth unless the mouth is already open and you use a soft object like a handkerchief between the side teeth.
- (4) Generally, there is no need to call for medical assistance unless the seizure is immediately followed by another or the seizure lasts more than 10 minutes.
- (5) Remember, the person has expended a lot of energy during the seizures and may need to rest after the seizure.

16. **Autistic Children**

Children with autism are born with it. While it is not yet well understood, it is believed to be caused by brain damage. Sometimes, autism is present in retarded children but many autistic children demonstrate behavioral characteristics that indicate they are quite bright. Following are some other things to keep in mind when transporting autistic children.

- a. They may appear withdrawn and may sit for hours making rocking motions, waving hands, or spinning around.
- b. They will generally avoid contact with persons or animals, preferring to remain withdrawn.
- c. They may be slow in developing their speech and will have a tendency to repeat what others say.
- d. They are attracted to bright or shiny objects and prefer everything to be orderly.
- e. They don't like to be interrupted in a task or have their environment disturbed. If interrupted, they may appear frightened or begin screaming. When possible, always put them in the same seat trip after trip and attempt to stabilize their environment as much as possible.

CHAPTER III

DEFENSIVE AND SAFE DRIVING PROCEDURES

1. Accident Prevention

By practicing good defensive driving practices, over 90 percent of accidents can be prevented. Therefore, SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT.

2. Driver Defensive Driving Tools

As a driver, you have your own defensive driving tools. They are your brain, eyes, ears, arms, hands, and feet.

3. Acquired Defensive Driving Skills

A driver can acquire specific defensive driving skills through practice. You can develop or improve your ability to survey the road and identify potential hazards, remain cognizant of your vehicle safety zone and everything and everyone that enters that zone, recall and practice the rules of the road, fully understand your vehicle's equipment, and safely maneuver your vehicle.

4. Vehicle Defensive Driving Tools

By using a combination of driver skills and vehicle defensive driving tools, you can be a good defensive and safe driver. Your vehicle's defensive driving tools are the steering wheel, brakes, lights, horn, defroster, windshield wipers, mirrors, and accelerator.

5. Starting Procedures

Starting procedures will vary slightly depending on the type of vehicle. If the vehicle does not have a "PARK" for the transmission or if the vehicle has a manual transmission, then be sure the parking brake is set and the transmission is in neutral before starting the vehicle.

6. Warning Lights and Caution Lights

Once the engine has started, check all the warning and caution lights and gauges for proper oil pressure, brake system failure, etc. When the engine starts don't let it "race" or run at high speed until sufficient oil pressure has built up to lubricate the engine. If the engine continues to run at a high speed after starting, do not put it in gear. Shut it down and report the problem.

7. Mirrors, Safety Inspection, Seat Belts

Waiting for the engine to warm up is a good time to adjust your mirrors, complete your pre-trip safety inspection, and fasten your seat belt.

8. Accelerating

When accelerating the vehicle, keep it smooth whether you are accelerating from a stop or accelerating while moving. Unnecessarily quick acceleration or "jack rabbit" starts can throw passengers around causing them discomfort and pain. It also wastes fuel.

9. Steering

Proper steering techniques can also make the ride smoother. One of the best ways to steer is place your hands on the wheel by imagining the wheel as a clock dial with the top of the wheel representing 12 o'clock. Place your right hand at the 3 o'clock position and your left hand at the 9 o'clock position. Now, you can smoothly turn left by pulling the wheel with your left hand and pushing it with the right hand. To steer right, simply reverse the process. When steering keep both palms around the wheel with the thumbs on top. Never hook your thumbs around the wheel and avoid wearing any jewelry that could get caught in your clothes and restrict the movement of your hands on the wheel. These procedures should work well whether changing lanes or turning.

10. Backing

Even with the proper safeguards, backing a vehicle can be very dangerous. Your mirrors are of only limited use because of blind spots. For example, you may be able to see another vehicle in your mirror but not a child standing in the same spot. If you are not absolutely sure that there are no persons or obstacles behind your vehicle, put it in park, put on the emergency brake and get out and check. If it is absolutely necessary to back your vehicle and there is not another employee or responsible person to assist you, put on your emergency flashers and give short continuous beeps on the horn while backing. The best policy for backing is to try to maneuver your vehicle so that backing is seldom required.

11. Mirror Adjustment

Mirrors are helpful while backing, turning, and changing lanes. They can also help you to survey the road when properly adjusted. Remember, mirrors do have limitations. The left side mirror is used to check traffic on the left side of your vehicle. However, there is usually a blind spot directly over your shoulder and directly behind the vehicle. The right side mirror is used to check traffic and other activity on the right side but there is usually a blind spot directly under the mirror near the front end and directly behind the vehicle. Also, remember that many right side mirrors make objects appear farther away than they really are. The other mirror, your overhead rearview mirror, may be of little use on a crowded vehicle except to check on your passengers. If you can see out the back windows of your vehicle, use the rear view mirror for surveying the road.

12. Surveying the Road

Surveying the road means being alert to what is going on outside the vehicle. This can be accomplished by looking in the left mirror, glancing in the overhead mirror, looking in the right mirror, then looking straight ahead through the windshield. Then, repeat the pattern every 10-15 seconds as you drive. You can control what you and your vehicle do but you must survey the road for potential accidents involving other drivers, their vehicles, pedestrians, and other road hazards. By surveying the road, you are assuming and preparing for the worst.

13. Vehicle Safety Zone

One of the reasons you survey the road is to keep your safety zone as clear of hazards as possible. The safety zone consists of the area near the rear, front, and sides of your vehicle. How large the areas are depends on the width of the traffic lane, and roadside obstacles, your following distances and other vehicle's following distance from you. The zone is affected by the speed of your vehicle, the speed of other vehicles around you, and the weather. Since you cannot always keep your safety zone free of hazards, the key is to know when the hazards are present and adjust your driving and plan ahead accordingly. Much of this can be accomplished by the use of your vehicle's defensive driving tools. They are:

- a. The Brakes - your most basic tool.
- b. The Lights - they allow you to see better and make you more visible to others during times of reduced visibility.
- c. The Turn Signals - when properly used, they inform others of your intentions.
- d. The Accelerator - the accelerator can help you adjust your speed to avoid an accident.
- e. The Horn - it can warn others of your presence but it doesn't give you the right of way.
- f. The Defroster, Air Conditioner, Windshield Washer and Wipers - they can provide a clear windshield when properly used.

14. Following Distance

The safety zone in front of your vehicle is best controlled by you when exercising the proper following distances. To establish the proper following distance, we recommend the 1,000 and 4 rule. To use the rule, you should note when the vehicle ahead passes a point such as a pole, tree, or sign. When the vehicle in front of you passes that point, you should begin counting by saying "one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three, one thousand and four." If you pass that same point before reaching "one thousand and four," you are following too closely behind the vehicle to stop or take defensive or evasive action. If you have stopped behind another vehicle, don't move until the other vehicle has moved and you have counted to "one thousand and three." This should give you sufficient time to respond if the vehicle in front of you has had to make a quick stop because of a careless pedestrian or other obstacle moving into the path of the vehicle.

If you maintain a proper following distance, you should be able to stop without striking the vehicle, motorcycle, etc., in front of you.

15. Routine Braking

Under normal routine braking, smooth and steady pressure on the brake pedal should provide a smooth and safe stop. Stepping sharply and heavily on the brake pedal should only be done when an emergency stop is required.

16. Stopping Distance

In an emergency, stopping distance is determined by reaction time and braking distance.

a. Reaction time is that time that passes from the instant you perceive the need to brake until your foot actually hits the brake. While many professional drivers have been tested as having a reaction time of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second, it is a fast reaction time and usually involves the driver knowing the test is being done. In reality, most reaction times are slower than $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second. During reaction time, your vehicle continues to move down the road. For example, a vehicle going 25 mph will travel 27 feet during reaction time of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second. At 35 mph, the travel distance is over 38 feet, and at 55 mph, the travel distance is over 60 feet. Remember, these are the distances you will travel before you ever apply the brakes.

b. Braking distance is the distance it takes your vehicle to stop once the brakes are applied. Some of the factors that affect braking distance are:

Vehicle Weight - this is a factor during braking because weight shifting forward may prevent the wheels from locking immediately. The faster your vehicle is traveling and the heavier it is, the more acute weight shift becomes.

Road Surface - road surface affects braking distance because of the amount of friction created between the sliding tires and the road. This is called the coefficient of friction and is rarely the same for any two surfaces.

Weather Conditions - weather conditions also affect braking distance. It will take a vehicle longer to stop on a wet road than it will on a dry road. For example, if a vehicle traveling at 45 mph on a dry road can slide to a stop in 100 feet, it may take that same vehicle 150 feet to stop on the same road when it is wet. If the road is icy, the braking distance could be longer than 225 feet!

c. Mechanical Condition of the Brakes - if any of the brakes are not working properly, it will take you longer to stop. If you suspect there is a problem with the braking system, report it immediately so that corrective action can be taken.

NOTE: Except for bald tires, tire or tread design have very little effect on braking distance on dry surfaces.

As we stated before, stopping distance is determined by adding the distance traveled during reaction time to the distance traveled during braking. For example, at 25 mph, the vehicle will travel about 27 feet during reaction time, and if all the brakes are functioning and the road is dry, the vehicle could brake to a stop in about 31 feet for a total stopping distance of 58 feet. This can be expressed as follows:

Reaction time at 25 mph (3/4 sec) + Braking equals stopping distance
27 feet plus 31 feet = 58 feet

Reaction time at 35 mph (3/4 sec) + Braking equals stopping distance
38 feet plus 61 feet = 99 feet

Reaction time at 55 mph (3/4 sec) + Braking equals stopping distance
60 feet plus 150 feet = 210 feet

If the above vehicle was traveling 55 mph and the pavement was wet, the braking distance could be as high as 225 feet. Adding that to the reaction distance of 60 feet gives us a total stopping distance of 285 feet. That's a good reason to slow down in wet weather!

NOTE: It should be pointed out that once you lock up all the wheels in a braking action and all the tires start to slide, you can no longer control the direction of travel of the vehicle. Even if you turn the wheel after the braking, the vehicle will continue to slide in the direction it was headed and wherever gravity takes it!

17. Changing Lanes

When changing lanes, we recommend you signal your intentions at least 150 feet before you want to change. Look into the mirror on the side you want to move to, change lanes smoothly when the side of your vehicle is clear. Don't forget that your mirrors do have blind spots. Once you have changed lanes, use the "1,000 and 4" rule to re-establish following distance.

18. Merging Into Traffic Lanes

When merging into expressway or traffic lanes, signal at least 150 feet before entering the lane and try to match your speed to the vehicles already in the lane you are merging into. However, be careful to watch for drivers ahead of you who may have carelessly stopped while trying to merge. Once you are into the traffic lane, re-establish following distance by using the "1,000 and 4" rule.

19. Exiting Traffic Lanes

When exiting a traffic lane or leaving the expressway, signal at least 250-300 feet before you want to exit. Check the mirror on the exit side and move into the exit or deceleration lane as early as possible and when it is clear. If you signal more than 250-300 feet ahead of time, drivers following you may assume you forgot to turn your signal off from some other maneuver and may actually attempt to pass you on the side to which you are trying to move. Once in the exit lane, begin slowing down to below the posted limit. If possible, avoid slowing down until you reach the exit lane since expressway traffic usually involves higher speeds and demands extra attention that other drivers may not exercise.

20. Passing

Passing another vehicle on an expressway can usually be handled like a normal lane change. However, passing a vehicle on a two-lane road is another matter. If you must pass on a two-lane road, maintain your proper following distance until ready to pass. Make sure there is no oncoming traffic, you have plenty of room, someone isn't about to pass you, and you are not in a no-passing zone. Check your left mirror, signal, and smoothly accelerate into the oncoming traffic lane and pass the vehicle. Before pulling back into the right lane ahead of the vehicle you have just passed, signal your lane change again and check your mirrors to make sure you have left the other vehicle with proper following distance.

If someone passes you, keep your speed constant and be prepared to drop back if the passing vehicle cuts in too close in front of you. Use the "1,000 and 4" rule to establish following distance.

21. Curves

Curves in the road usually aren't a problem if you follow some simple rules such as slowing to below the posted limit, not braking during the curve if possible, and not passing on the curve if it is only a two-lane road. While some drivers boast that they can negotiate a curve at a speed much greater than the posted limit, they are wrong in some cases. Speed limits for curves are established by taking into consideration such factors as an "average" driver's skill, an "average" vehicle's steering and suspension system, the road surface, and amount of bank of the curve. However, while some posted speed limits may make allowances for wet pavement, many do not make allowances for snow and ice. If you are unsure of road conditions on a curve, slow down!

22. Intersections

Over 1/3 of all accidents occur at intersections. Intersections are regulated by traffic signals or signs or rules of the road. When approaching an intersection, slow down and be prepared to stop. Obey all traffic lights and signs and survey the intersection by looking left, then right, then left again. When entering the intersection, be sure to survey the intersection for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Be prepared to stop or yield at any time. At four way stops, the vehicle that arrived at the intersection first, usually goes first. If there are no signs or signals and two vehicles arrive at the same time, the one on the right usually goes first. However, some drivers do not always follow the rule or the rule may not always apply, so, be prepared to yield the right of way when necessary to avoid an accident. When making right turns on a red light where law permits, make sure there is not cross traffic coming and there are not pedestrians crossing from your right or left.

23. Railroad Crossings

Since railroad crossings are very dangerous points, we make the following recommendations:

- a. Always put emergency flashers on as you approach the crossing.
- b. Never assume railroad signals or gates are working properly.

- c. Stop short of the tracks in the farthest right lane but close enough to let you see down the tracks in both directions.
- d. If necessary, open the front door or window to listen for a signal or approaching train.
- e. Check each set of tracks before crossing.
- f. Maintain proper following distance so that you don't have to stop on the tracks at any time.
- g. Avoid shifting manual transmissions while on the tracks. Don't risk being stalled on the tracks because of transmission problems.
- h. We recommend that your vehicle have a sign on the back warning other drivers that you stop at railroad crossings.

24. Night Driving

Driving at night requires extra added attention because of a sharp reduction in visibility. Following distance should be strictly maintained and you should try to plan to stop in that portion of road illuminated by your headlights. Be sure to turn on your lights before sunset and leave them on for awhile after sunrise. Try to drive with your brights or high beams on except when there is a car less than 500 feet in front of you going the same direction, or, there is a car approaching you within 500 feet. If a vehicle approaches you with its high beams on, you can signal the vehicle with your high beams but don't leave your high beams on. If the other vehicle leaves its high beams on, look to the right side of road until the vehicle passes. If you leave your high beams on in retaliation, there are now two nearly blind drivers!

25. Fog and Smoke

In smoke or fog, always use your low beams so that you'll be able to see the road much better. If possible, never stop on the roadway in dense smoke or fog. It is better not to drive into it at all than to drive into it, become blind, and stop on the roadway. Stopping on the roadway invites a serious rear-end collision from following traffic. The cardinal rule to driving safely at night or in fog or smoke is SLOW DOWN.

26. Slippery Pavement

The main dangers while driving on slippery pavement are the longer distances required to stop and the possibility of an unintentional skid. Since stopping distance increases on wet, icy, or snowy pavement, or on wet leaves, you should slow down and increase your following distance two or three times the normal dry weather distance. To avoid an unintentional skid, you should (1) slow down, (2) accelerate slowly and evenly when acceleration is required, (3) use a pumping motion when braking is required, (4) try to avoid any quick or abrupt movements of the steering wheel, and (5) plan ahead. If, in spite of all your efforts to drive defensively, your vehicle starts to skid, you can probably stop the skid by (1) easing up on the accelerator, (2) not using the brakes, and (3) turning the steering wheel in the direction of the skid. Turning the steering wheel in the direction of the skid can assist in stopping the skid. For example,

if the rear tires start to skid right, turn the steering wheel to the right. This maneuver is also simply referred to as "steering down the road."

27. Driver Ability

Other areas that can affect your ability to drive safely and defensively are personal problems, inadequate rest, alcohol and/or drug use, and illness.

Personal problems can cause stress which can affect your alertness, awareness, and ability to make quick but sound decisions. While no one expects you to be able to turn off your personal feelings like a machine, you should be aware that personal problems can affect your judgement. Be prepared to deal with your problems by keeping your mind on your driving and exercising greater caution.

The amount of rest you get can greatly affect your alertness and reaction time. Adjust your schedule and life style to ensure that you get adequate rest to be alert on the job.

Alcohol in any amount affects your alertness and ability to function as a defensive driver. You should not drink any alcohol for at least 8 hours before coming to work. Under no circumstances should you drink alcohol on the job or at breaks. Both legal and illegal drugs can also affect your ability and attitude. Consult your doctor about using any medicine on the job. Of course, using illegal drugs at any time is neither permitted or condoned.

Illness can also affect your ability to function safely and defensively. For illness, there are two recommended rules. They are: (1) If you are ill, don't drive, and (2), if you are chronically ill, seek employment that does not require you to drive for a living or even as a volunteer.

28. Passenger Loading

If you have an established route with fixed zones and signs for loading and discharging passengers, a good rule of thumb to consider is stopping about 3 feet short of the sign when possible. If there is a curb in the loading zone, signal your intentions before pulling in, then try to stop about 6 inches from the curb so that it will be easier for ambulatory passengers to get on or off the vehicle. If you must park further than 6 inches from the curb, then it is recommended that you park at least 3 feet from the curb so that passengers won't try to stretch from the curb to the vehicle. If you discharge or pick up passengers where there is no curb, park your vehicle as if the edge of the road was a curb. In case your regular loading area is blocked, you may have to load and discharge passengers from the street. Any time that you have to discharge passengers into the street, warn them ahead of time that they should watch their step and that they will be in the street upon leaving the vehicle.

When boarding and discharging passengers in bad weather, try to maneuver your vehicle so that passengers can avoid deep water, snow, slush, or mud.

When you do not have a fixed route or if you handle elderly and handicapped passengers, you will need to be very flexible as to your boarding and discharging sites.

If you use vehicles with a rear lift or ramp, you will need sufficient clearance behind you to maneuver wheelchairs onto the ramp or lift. If you use vehicles with side lifts, you must leave sufficient space between the lift and the curb to board wheelchairs. On vehicles with side ramps, it may be convenient to park close enough to the curb so that the ramp rests directly on the curb. This usually reduces the angle on the ramp and requires less effort to push the wheelchair up the ramp.

A consideration to make when dealing with wheelchair passengers is the type of surface the passengers must use to get to your vehicle. Whenever possible, park in an area that has a smooth and solid surface leading to your vehicle. Moving a wheelchair across a rough or soft surface is not only difficult, it can be extremely dangerous for the chair occupant and may actually damage the chair.

Another safety feature you can adopt when you have to assist passengers with special needs is to wear shoes with non-skid materials to avoid slips and falls.