

THE NEED TO SPEED

Ever wonder why everyone is moving faster and faster? I am not sure if I have an answer to that question, but I do see that people behind the wheel are moving so fast that I have become more nervous than ever to drive on the road. I think of my wife who drives my kids and my grandchildren around, and these other drivers around her are just moving so fast. They have no regard for speed limits, no regard for passing other cars in a school zone, or maintaining a minimum speed in a school zone. The list goes on and on. I just see vehicles moving with no regard for public safety and it has become an epidemic.

According to NHTSA, speeding endangers everyone on the road. In 2017, speeding killed 9,717, accounting for more than a quarter (26%) of all traffic fatalities that year. This is not surprising based on what I see on the road, and I am sure that you see it as well. But what can we do?

The frustrations of hurried life, the stress of work, the preparation of kids for school, or the preparation for the elderly who need attention, again the list goes on in what we do before we hit the road. It just seems that speed limits are just signs that decorate our highways and residential streets as we're speeding right by them.

Speeding is more than just breaking the law. The consequences are far-ranging:

Greater potential for loss of vehicle control;

Reduced effectiveness of air bags;

Increased stopping distance after the driver perceives a danger;

Economic implications of a speed-related crash; and

Increased fuel consumption/cost.

What Drives Speeding?

According to NHTSA research, speeding is a type of aggressive driving behavior. Several factors have contributed to an overall rise in aggressive driving:

TRAFFIC

We here in El Paso have been experiencing major highway construction and residential construction at a monumental pace. Because we are experiencing this, it has led and contributed to aggressive driving such as speeding. From speeding, changing lanes frequently, or becoming angry at anyone who they believe impedes their progress, we are indeed not unique as a community than any other because of traffic.

RUNNING LATE

Some people drive aggressively because they have too much to do and are “running late” for work, school, their next meeting, or other appointments.

ANONYMITY

This occurs when the vehicle insulates the driver from the world. Shielded from the outside environment, a driver can develop a sense of detachment, as if an observer of their surroundings, rather than a participant. This can lead to some people feeling less constrained in their behavior when they cannot be seen by others and/or when it is unlikely that they will ever again see those who witness their behavior.

DISREGARD FOR OTHERS AND FOR THE LAW

If it seems that there are more cases of rude and outrageous behavior on the road now more than ever. The observation is correct - - if for no other reason than there are more drivers driving more miles on the

same roads than ever before. There are more elder drivers and young drivers and we need to account for their presence because they move slower. Young drivers just lack maturity and experience behind the wheel.

For the most part, drivers rarely drive aggressively. For others, episodes of aggressive driving are frequent, and for others this is their usual driving behavior.

Aggressive driving remains a serious concern amongst drivers in a survey conducted by the AAA Foundation. In that same survey a substantial number of drivers admitted to engaging in aggressive behaviors, such as traveling more than 15 mph above the speed limit or running a red light. In another Foundation study, aggressive actions- such as tailgating, erratic lane changing, or illegal passing contributed to 56% of fatal crashes.

In a separate AAA Foundation study of more than 10,000 road rage incidents committed over seven years, the results revealed 218 murders and another 12,610 injury cases and the reasoning behind these driving behaviors was trivial.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety offers three basic guiding principles to avoid being the victim of an aggressive driver:

1. Don't offend other drivers, i.e. avoid tailgating, no obscene gestures;
2. Don't engage other drivers, steer clear, avoid eye contact;
3. Adjust your attitude, forget winning, put yourself in the other driver's shoes and if you think you have a problem, ask for help.

Speeding along with impaired driving, drowsy driving and cell phone usage remain the leading causes of traffic safety concerns for us all. As

we enter another school year and upcoming holiday season, let us celebrate being courteous and cautious drivers. Safe travels.