

# Driving Hazards & Risk Reduction With Sharp Drive

Many of Sharp Drive's courses deal with recognising driving hazards and responding to them with the right risk reduction strategies. Combinations of hazards occurring together make every situation different, but by applying the principles and actions we have been learning we can reduce the crash risks for any driving situation.

We need to identify the hazards and assess the risk potential, and predict how they might affect us, then take actions to eliminate or reduce that risk. One word sums it up – anticipation, which is achieved by 'eyes up' driving and scanning. You can encounter hazards any time you change your position or driving situation relative to the other traffic. That is, either moving into or out of traffic flow, or moving past other stationary or moving traffic. Or, moving through or across the path of other traffic at such situations as intersections and roundabouts, and moving back in the traffic by reversing or changing the direction, a u-turn or three point turn.

There is a typical action sequence for these manoeuvres, known as the system of car control. Plan your course and check there is enough of a gap or space for your intended path. For every manoeuvre, check the space behind you in your mirrors and always follow a mirror check with a glance over your shoulder for your blind spots. Signal your intention for at least three seconds.

It is very helpful to other drivers to indicate as early as possible, without being misleading. Not indicating in time can inconvenience other drivers and even cause 'road rage'. Use brakes, correct gear selection and acceleration to manage your speed. Changing down gears while braking is better than changing in mid manoeuvre. Never coast in neutral or with your foot on the clutch.

The risk factors can be broadly grouped into these driving conditions. Driver, vehicle, weather, light, road and traffic. Crash positions simply define the position from which any crash may occur. For example, crashes from the side occur when moving through intersections and roundabouts. Our main defence against collisions with the vehicle in front or coming from behind is two and four second rules, covered earlier in the Stopping module.

Actions to avoid head-on collisions with oncoming traffic were covered in Distractions, Control, Eyes-up Driving, Fatigue and more. The Eyes-up Driving module also shows how to develop situational awareness and apply the 12 second rule. Learn to quickly identify anything unfamiliar in any situation, and adjust your response accordingly. Look out for the unexpected, clues that other vehicles aren't doing what they should or what they have indicated. The driver may be looking the wrong way or be distracted.

Gap selection is the ability to estimate time and space needed to complete any manoeuvre without making any other drivers alter their speed and direction. For safe gap selection we must become competent in these skills. Quick, accurate right of way decision making is based on sound Road Code knowledge, speed judgement, distance judgement, vehicle handling confidence and ability under acceleration, braking and steering, patience and tolerance, consistently following the two and four second rules.

We should avoid causing unnecessary delays because over caution or a lack of confidence and ability. However, don't let pressure from other drivers cause you to make bad gap selection decisions.

Crashes involve vehicles of every shape and size, from bikes and motorbikes to large trucks or even a horse and cart, both stationary and moving. Pedestrians and kids on skateboards are significant hazards when we are moving past. Pass the Sharp Drive Course and avoid having to learn from bad judgement calls, and for more information on online driving courses Australia, online safety courses and online driving courses Brisbane please go to <http://www.sharpdrive.co.nz>.

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