



VITALS

For Medical Transport Professionals

A Weekly Safety Newsletter

Number 1 Traffic Safety Threat In The USA

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), aggressive driving is the most serious traffic threat in our country. NHTSA proposes that aggressive driving occurs when "an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses so as to endanger other persons or property."

Although there is no stereotype of aggressive drivers, they are most likely to be between the ages of 18 and 34. It is interesting to note that men and women are equally likely to be aggressive, but men are more frequently involved in crashes.

Most people (70%) say that they have been the victim of an aggressive driver, but only about 25% admit to driving aggressively. These numbers come from the general population. Might people in the Medical Transportation industry have personality traits that increase the likelihood of aggressive driving in the environment in which they work? Is it more difficult for our personnel to self-recognize their aggression? If we think about the NHTSA definition of aggressive driving, it is clear that we must develop the mindset that such driving is a harmful action and a target for Risk Management.

According to Gordon Graham, "Risk Management is any activity that involves the evaluation or comparison of risks and the development, selection and implementation of control measures that change, reduce or eliminate the probability or the consequences of a harmful action." In this case, Risk Management boils down to getting our drivers that engage in the ineffective and destructive behavior of unsafe driving to choose to drive safely. How can we get our drivers to recognize that they are driving aggressively, recognize that aggressive driving gives them less time to think and mobilize them to want to change?

People engage in behaviors (Yes, driving is a behavior) to meet specific needs. The National Safety Council (NSC) "Attitudinal Dynamics of Driving" course uses Dr. William Glasser's "Choice Theory" to categorize needs and match them to driving behavior. Here is a list of basic need categories with related characteristics and driving behavior (Source: Safety+Health, October, 2007)



POWER-COMPETITIVE

- ⊙ Act aggressively; don't yield to other drivers
- ⊙ Views other drivers as opponents or obstacles of their own progress
- ⊙ Show disrespect for traffic laws
- ⊙ Are willing to break traffic laws

POWER-ASSERTIVE

- ⊙ Are confident in their driving skills and abilities
- ⊙ Stand up for their rights on the road
- ⊙ Want to reach their destination as quickly as possible, often to the point of taking unnecessary risks
- ⊙ Cooperate with other drivers in making everyone's driving easier

LOVE AND BELONGING

- ⊙ Show concern for other drivers
- ⊙ Cooperate with other drivers
- ⊙ Demonstrate courtesy
- ⊙ Drive to their destination without breaking laws or inhibiting others

FREEDOM

- ⊙ Display independence
- ⊙ Are willing to take some risks
- ⊙ Drive for the challenge
- ⊙ Are willing to participate in driving games like chicken and racing
- ⊙ Are willing to make exceptions to traffic laws

FUN

- ⊙ Drive for fun and recreation
- ⊙ Are willing to take risks
- ⊙ Drive vehicles with lots of power
- ⊙ Are likely to play driving games

Experts have suggested that frustration (which is what occurs when needs aren't met) is the root of aggressive driving. Maybe group discussions using this list will help drivers look at their needs and find better ways to meet them.



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