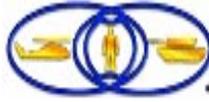


# Directorate of Public Safety

1 Jan, 03



## New Year's Resolution: I'll Be a Better Driver

When each New Year dawns, it becomes time to wipe the slate clean, start fresh, and be the person you want to be. This year, why not resolve to be a better driver?

For one thing, this may be the year to attempt something new. The problem for many of us is that soon after we resolve to stop smoking, cut down on fats or read War and Peace, we revert back to our old selves. Even before the ink on the new list is dry, we're puffing away, eating bratwurst and watching I Love Lucy reruns.

One reason for this lack of staying power may be that we make the same old list every year. Check last year's list, and the year before, and the year before that. If this year's list is the same as last year's, it's time for you to try a totally new, never-been-tried-before resolution: I'm going to be a motorist par excellence this year.

Before you scoff at the idea, think about your driving habits. Driving in the metro area-both city and suburbs-can be a hassle. Too many cars, too many traffic signals, too many traffic jams. Like the story of the mild-mannered Dr. Jekyll who turns into the evil Mr. Hyde, traffic can do strange things to us when we get behind the wheel. Now is the time to resolve to do better.

Just because you think you're a good driver doesn't mean you couldn't stand a little improvement. Most of us consider ourselves better than average-if not excellent-drivers. Unfortunately, some of us use this belief as an excuse for bad driving: "I have better reflexes and driving skills than others drivers, which is why it's okay for me to weave in and out of traffic to speed past them." On a bad day, it even justifies tailgating and honking.

Well, if you've ever honked or tailgated another driver and felt bad about it-for example, when it turns out to be your favorite aunt or your boss-you're a candidate for a New Year's resolution. The fact is, most of us could be better drivers than we are. And there is at least one very good reason to become a better driver: the safety of our children.

So here's a New Year's Resolutions list to get you started:

**Pay attention.** Driving is a complex task that requires your full attention. Yet car phones and kids, cigarettes and CD players, can take your mind off the road. Fatigue and alcohol weaken your ability to concentrate. Last year, 15,000 people died by driving off the road.

**Keep cool.** Your judgment is better when you're calm. So make up your mind to keep your cool even if you get cut off, or when you hit a two-mile back-up that the radio traffic report failed to mention.

**Be courteous.** The golden rule applies to driving. Make room to let the other guy into your lane, for goodness sake. And if the other driver is a jerk, it doesn't mean you have to be one, too. Keep in mind that driving is not a competition. You don't have to be first to the mall or post office.

**Be a good role model.** Children watch and imitate parents, adult friends and relatives, and big brothers and sisters, too. Remember that 40 percent of all fatal crashes involve alcohol, so don't drink and drive. Also, watch your temper and use your turn signals. If you have good driving habits, chances are the children who look up to you will copy them when it's their turn to drive.

**Be a good neighbor.** You don't like it when other people speed through your neighborhood, so don't do it yourself. Respect other neighborhoods, drive with care, and don't litter. Also, remember that children can and will do the unexpected, so drive slowly and stay alert for them.

**Share the road.** Bicyclists and pedestrians have a right to use the road, just as you do. Keep in mind

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that we're all pedestrians at some time or another, and that bicyclists are oftentimes children.

**Wear your seat belt.** This is the single most important thing you and your passengers can do to protect yourselves. So insist that everyone wear them. Report traffic problems. When you come across potholes, illegible signs and uncoordinated traffic signals, report them. Municipalities won't fix them if they don't know about them. And they will respond more quickly if they feel a little pressure from the motoring public.

**Parents, get involved in your teen's driving.** As a parent, you've struggled for years to prepare your child for the adult world. Don't drop the ball now. Make a "contract" with your new driver that spells out the conditions under which your teen is allowed to drive, and then enforce it. Teens need to know that you consider driving an earned privilege that you will withdraw if they don't live up to their end of the bargain. But you have a responsibility, too: Make sure that they are properly trained.

**Teens, be humble.** The teen crash and death rate is off the charts. Why? Inexperience and a false sense of invulnerability can lead to all kinds of mistakes. So teens, accept the fact that to be a good driver takes time and practice. Be willing to listen and learn. Be humble, because you're not as good a driver as you think you are—and you're not invulnerable. The reality is that when it comes to driving, a small mistake can destroy a bright future.

**Seniors, know thyself.** They say that "time and tide wait for no man." Aging is a fact of life. What we gain in experience, we lose in reflexes and eyesight. So be honest with yourself, know your limitations as a driver, and restrict your driving accordingly. This may mean no night driving, staying off expressways, or not driving after taking certain medications.

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## ENTER THE NEW YEAR RIGHT FIRE SAFE YOUR HOUSE

Each year, more than **3,000 people die and 16,000 are injured because of fires that start in homes.** These fires result in property losses of about \$4 billion. Children are particularly vulnerable. Each year, about **800 children under the age of 15 die of fire-related causes and about 500 of these deaths are to children under the age of 5 years.** In fact, children under age 5 have a fire death rate more than twice the national average.

CPSC standards and compliance activities have contributed to a decline in fires and fire deaths over the past several years. For example, CPSC's standard for child-resistant lighters has helped reduce fire deaths from children playing with lighters by 43 percent since 1994. Other CPSC standards include general wearing apparel, children's sleepwear, mattresses, and carpets and rugs. CPSC staff is working on standard proposals for upholstered furniture and for heating and cooking equipment. Recalls have been announced for battery-operated children's vehicles, non-child-resistant lighters, halogen lamps, dishwashers, extension cords, toasters, and other products.

"CPSC's safety standards and recalls have helped save hundreds of lives but many pre-standard and recalled products remain in people's homes," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "That's why we need to do some spring cleaning and check our homes and 'knick-knack' drawers for old disposable lighters, frayed extension cords, and other products that could be hazardous." "We can get dangerous products off store shelves, but the real challenge is to get them out of families' homes." It's time to do your part to get hazardous products out of your home.

[Some of the hazardous products that might be in your homes are:](#)

--**Cigarette Lighters without child-resistant mechanisms.** CPSC's standard requires that both disposable cigarette lighters and novelty lighters made since 1994 must be hard for children under 5 years of age to operate. Novelty lighters are often in the shape of toys or other objects that appeal to children. According to CPSC data, this safety standard has helped reduce fire deaths from children playing with lighters by 43 percent since 1994. CPSC estimates that the standard for child-resistant lighters and novelty lighters should help save more than 100 lives each year. Never allow children access to cigarette or novelty lighters. Discard old non-child-resistant lighters. CPSC and Gladstrong Investments USA are announcing the recall of about 13 million disposable lighters because their child-resistant mechanisms are frequently ineffective. **A 4-year-old girl died after starting a fire with a Gladstrong Investments lighter and then hiding in a closet.**

--**Extension cords** with frayed or cut insulation, undersize wire, loose connections, or improper grounding can cause fires. Each year, there are approximately **5,700 fires and 40 deaths related to faulty extension cords, power strips, and surge**

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**protectors.** Make sure your extension cords have a certification label from an independent testing lab

such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories) or ETL (Intertek Testing Services).

CPSC sometimes learns of deaths or serious injuries caused by previously recalled products. We want to prevent these needless tragedies, we urge people to get CPSC's list of recalls and check for old products that could be hazardous."

CPSC's toll-free telephone hotline and web site provide information about recalled products and information on what to look for when buying products. Consumers can reach the hotline at 800-638-2772 or visit the web site at <http://www.cpsc.gov> To get a list of major recalls, consumers should send a postcard to "Recall List," CPSC, Washington, D.C. 20207

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## SAFER BY THE DOZEN

Year after year, it appears the New Year's resolutions topping most Americans' lists - quitting smoking, losing weight and managing finances better - are also those most likely to be broken before February. Recognizing this, Lowe's Home Safety Council (LHSC) created a list of easy-to-follow home safety resolutions that encourage homeowners to start the year off right and ensure a happy and safe new year.

Here are some monthly "around-the-house" safety tips that homeowners can resolve to follow in the coming year to help make their families and homes safer:

### January

- **Create a smoke alarm checklist** - A new year means a new start. LHSC encourages all homeowners to test their smoke alarms once a month. What better time to begin than New Year's Day? Homeowners should have smoke alarms on each floor of their home, and one in each bedroom.

### February

- **Install or check carbon monoxide alarms** - Around Valentine's Day, homeowners should take the extra steps necessary to protect loved ones by installing carbon monoxide alarms in the home, especially if they use fuel-burning furnaces or home appliances.

### March (Poison Prevention Week, March 17-23)

- **Lock poisons out of children's reach** - According to the National Safety Council, nearly 300,000 people each year suffer from poisonings, with more than 6,000 cases resulting in death. One way to prevent poisoning is by storing all cleaning supplies, hazardous chemicals and medications out of reach of children and in a locked cabinet.

### April

- **Install non-skid backing or tape under all area rugs** - Statistics show that 50 percent of "foolish," preventable injuries occur in or around the home. Since falls are the leading cause of home injury for children and seniors, people should place a non-skid backing or tape underneath all area rugs. Installing slip-resistant finishes or mats in the shower or tub can also help prevent nasty falls.

### May

- **Fence in your pool** - Memorial Day marks the beginning of swimming pool season. Ensure safety for your family and neighbors by installing a tall fence with a locked gate around your swimming pool.

### June (National Home Safety Week, June 9-15)

- **Conduct a home safety inspection** - LHSC has a home safety checklist at <http://www.loweshomesafety.org/safehome/top20english.pdf> and at Lowe's stores. To ensure your home is as safe as can be, conduct a home safety assessment.

### July

- **Clean your outdoor grill** - Nothing says summer like a blazing barbeque. LHSC encourages homeowners to clean grills after each use to prevent grease buildup that can

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catch fire. Even after cooking the grill will remain hot, so be sure to keep children away.

### August

- **Install deadbolt locks on exterior doors** - August is both the end of summer and the beginning of a new school year. With the number of latchkey kids increasing each

school year, parents can help ensure their children are safe inside the home by installing 1-inch deadbolt locks on all external doors.

### September (Baby Safety Month)

- **Check miniblinds** - Place cribs away from windows and blind cords out of reach of children to help prevent strangulation.

### October (National Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 6-12)

- **Change your smoke alarm batteries** - Daylight-saving time usually ends on the last Sunday in October. Starting in January, you've been checking your smoke alarm each month; this month is the time to change your smoke alarm battery as you inspect and adjust every clock in your home.

### November

- **Check your fire extinguishers** - The start of the holiday season also marks an increase in cooking and grease fires. Remember to keep a fire extinguisher handy for the amateur - and experienced - chef, and make sure you know how to use it.

### December

- **Decorate with delight** - According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year hospital emergency rooms treat about 7,500 people for injuries related to holiday lights and decorations. Make this a safe and festive holiday season by purchasing miniature lights tested by an independent laboratory, such as UL.

*Source: Lowe's Home Safety Council Website*

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### *Why Is Hurrying Dangerous?*

We often associate the dangers of hurrying with reckless driving and speeding. When we're late or flustered, we become more stressed and tense and tend to lose patience with those who are "in our way." To make matters worse, we're more likely to forget things and make bad decisions. Here are a couple of examples of where hurrying caused bad accidents:

- Witnesses to a horrible bus accident in Nashville, Tenn., stated that the bus driver ran two consecutive

red lights before crashing off a bridge over I-40. Two teenagers died when the bus crushed their Volkswagen bug to a height of 18 inches. The driver was trying to make up for lost time on his route.

- A witness to a deadly Amtrak train accident in Illinois confirmed an engineer's report that a truck driver tried to snake through the crossing gate to beat the train. Hurrying becomes dangerous when it overcomes your sense of caution, clouds your judgment and leads you to make mistakes. These mistakes come in two disastrous flavors — doing something wrong, or not doing the right thing.

### *Doing Something Wrong*

When we're in a hurry, we tend to make mistakes such as selecting the wrong switch, using an incorrect tool or spare part, driving too fast and ignoring warnings.

If we're really rushed, we begin reacting impulsively rather than rationally. Here are two unfortunate examples of people who reacted without thinking:

- Two young construction workers in Arizona were in a hurry one Christmas Eve. They hadn't quite finished their holiday shopping and were rushing to take down a 40-foot aluminum ladder. Both were instantly killed when they grabbed the ladder as it toppled onto a 7,200-volt power line.
- An experienced private pilot was in the habit of raising the flaps during landing to "glue the plane to ground." One day while landing a Beech Bonanza, he reached over and, with a single swift motion, depressed a safety then lifted the gear switch. The propeller struck the tarmac and the plane "glued itself to the runway" much sooner than expected. Psychologists call these actions "errors of commission."

Recent studies suggest 60 percent of hurrying mistakes are the result of people doing the wrong thing.

### *Not Doing the Right Thing*

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When we're hurrying, we tend to take shortcuts sometimes failing to do things that we should. Psychologists classify these types of mistakes as "errors of omission." Organizations as well as individuals can make this type of error as shown in the following example:

- In January 1986, NASA was pressured to launch the Challenger space shuttle without delay. The Challenger's mission was to launch a Haley's Comet probe just before the Russians launched their own.

NASA also needed to launch the first teacher in space before the president's State of the Union address, which focused on education. NASA management chose to launch the Challenger in record cold temperatures (28°F) despite the protests of engineers who voiced concerns about the integrity of the rocket booster O-rings. They pointed out that the lowest previous Shuttle launch temperature was 53°F and that the boosters had never been tested below 40°F. Just over one minute into the flight, an O-ring on the right hand booster failed and the Challenger exploded, killing all seven astronauts.

### Why Do We Hurry?

Understanding *why* we hurry is important to reducing our tendency to hurry and will help us manage the risks when we are rushed. The following are four basic reasons why we hurry:

#### *One: High Workload*

Obviously, we hurry when we have more tasks, deadlines and responsibilities than we can handle. Unfortunately, the information age has increased the daily workload for nearly everyone. Gone are the days of two and three-week suspense times — now responses are expected soon after the boss's e-mail is read. What about downsizing and "doing more with less"? Consider how many people were employed at your job five years ago compared to today. Have the responsibilities and workload been lessened, or simply absorbed by the remaining workers? As workloads push us to the limit of our abilities, we're continually forced to operate in the hurry-up mode.

#### *Two: Running Late*

Thankfully, reliable transportation is now available for nearly everyone. Unfortunately, the downside of this modern convenience is that we're expected to be at more places and be at those places *on time*. We frequently check our watches for fear that we're running late for our next commitment. It takes only a

small delay to put a kink in our schedule and have us rushing to beat the clock.

#### *Three: Psychological Predisposition*

Many of us have a natural disposition toward "Type A" behavior. People with Type A behavior struggle to achieve more in less time. They have trouble relaxing or taking a break, concentrating on one task at a time, or finishing one task before going on to

another. Getting work off their mind and often try to do two things at once — such as eating and working. Type A's have a strong sense of time urgency and are particularly susceptible to the hazards associated with hurrying.

#### *Four: Professional Pressures*

Many supervisors view employees who work fast to meet deadlines as being especially productive and motivated. This behavior is often reinforced with extra praise or early promotion.

### Remedies for Hurrying

Libraries are filled with books on stress management, mainly because stress poses a danger to our continued health and well-being. By comparison, there are no well-known books or best sellers on the subject of hurry management. But there is hope. If you are prone to hurry or forced to hurry any activity, the following techniques will help you reduce the chances of making a mistake or causing an accident.

#### *Slow Down*

Obviously, the best method to control hurrying is to slow down. This requires two actions: (1) recognizing when we are hurried, and (2) consciously forcing ourselves to slow down. Simply realizing when our "HURRY" light is on is half the battle. Since rushing almost always causes stress, recognizing the symptoms of stress is essential to knowing when we are too hurried. Those symptoms include tightness in the chest, dizziness, shaking, irritable behavior and high blood pressure. By watching out for these, we'll know when it's time to slow down and exercise caution.

#### *"Wind the Clock"*

A tried-and-true pilot technique for handling overwhelming situations is to take a moment to "wind the clock." Instead of panicking when things become stressful, momentarily step away from the

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situation, calm down, and then re-attack the problem in a more rational manner.

### *B-Safe*

Surrounding yourself with people who *aren't* prone to rushing — easygoing Type B people — will also help you slow down. Most of us try to fit in by imitating the people around us. Studies suggest when Type A people are exposed to Type B people; the Type A folks tend to slow down.

### *Time Management*

As mentioned earlier, being late or delayed is a major reason why many people hurry. Managing our time wisely can help us set priorities, making sure we get the most important things done first so we're not rushed trying to do the remaining tasks. In addition, effective time management helps us to plan enough time to avoid running late or having to cut our travel times too close. It's a shame insurance companies don't offer reduced premiums for people who leave early enough to avoid having to rush while driving to work or appointments. We'd have fewer injuries and deaths due to careless and reckless drivers.

### *Just Say "No!"*

One of my former bosses used to tell me, "No good deed goes unpunished." In other words, the better you are at your job, the more work you will get. If you find yourself in this category, you need to learn to diplomatically say "no" to additional responsibilities when you're already tapped out. Otherwise you'll be stuck trying to do more in less time by hurrying.

### *Haste Makes Waste*

Today, more than ever before, we are expected to do more in *less time* and to be in more places *on time*. As a result, we're even more vulnerable to the hazards of hurrying. Chances are your last brush with death or injury happened because you (or someone else) was in an extreme hurry. Speed limit signs aren't just limited to our streets and highways nearly every activity we do has its own invisible speed limits. The more we exceed these "speed limits," the more we endanger others and ourselves. By recognizing the perils of rushing and being aware of when we are hurrying too much, we can defeat this deadly menace. Otherwise, haste will continue to lay waste to our lives and the lives of others around us.

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## Furnace, Space Heater, and Fireplace Safety Tips

With the cold snaps of fall and winter, residents are relying on their furnaces and fireplaces to keep warm. In an effort to prevent tragic home fires and deaths here are some things you need to do:

### **Furnace Safety**

- H**ave your furnace checked and cleaned regularly by a qualified repairperson.
- B**e sure all furnace automatic controls and emergency shutoffs are in good condition.
- L**ease furnace work to the experts. Don't attempt repairs unless you are qualified.
- H**ave the repairperson check the wall and ceiling near the furnace and flue. If they are hot, additional insulation or clearance may be needed.
- C**heck to ensure the flue pipes are well supported, free of holes and clean.
- M**ake sure the chimney is solid with no cracks or loose bricks. All unused flue openings should be sealed with solid masonry.
- K**eept trash and combustible storage away from the heating system.

### **Fireplace Safety**

- H**ave your chimney inspected annually for damage and obstructions.
- C**lean the chimney regularly to avoid buildup, also known as creosote, which could ignite your roof.
- B**e sure to use a screen in front of your fireplace large enough to catch rolling logs or sparks.
- D**on't use flammable liquids to start the fire.
- D**on't use excessive amounts of paper to build a fire. It's possible to ignite soot in the chimney by overbuilding the fire.
- N**ever burn charcoal in your fireplace. Burning charcoal gives off deadly amounts of carbon monoxide.
- B**e sure no flammable materials hang down from or decorate your mantel. A spark from your fireplace could ignite these materials and cause a fire.
- N**ever close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper can help hot ashes build up heat, causing the fire to flare up and ignite your room.
- S**tore cool ashes in a tightly sealed metal container.

### **Electric Space Heaters**

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The heater should be listed by UL (Underwriter's Laboratory). It should be equipped with a safety light, loud alarm, a switch that automatically shuts the heater off if it tips and a cut-off device in case of overheating. Space heaters must have space. Keep all objects, pets and people at least three feet away from the heater at all times. Don't use space heaters in your bathrooms.

Do not touch a space heater if you are wet. Never try to repair the heater yourself.

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### HOW TO FILL A GAS CAN TO MINIMIZE THE DANGER OF FIRE:

- \* Use only an approved container.
- \* Do not fill any container while it is inside a vehicle, a vehicle's trunk, pick-up bed, or on any surface other than the ground. This includes pickup trucks, sports utility vehicles, vans and others.
- \* Remove the approved container from the vehicle and place it on the ground a safe distance away from the vehicle, other customers and traffic.
- \* Keep the nozzle in contact with the can during filling.
- \* Never use a latch-open device to fill a portable container.
- \* Follow all other safety procedures, including

### No Smoking

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### ERGONOMIC AWARENESS: VIBRATION

#### What Is Hand - Arm Vibration (HAV)?

HAV occurs when the hands and arms are exposed to vibration. Sources of vibration may include handheld power tools or guiding materials, by hand, into a machine for processing.

#### What Are The Symptoms?

##### Vibration White Finger:

The symptoms of VWF are usually triggered by exposure to cold or wet environments. Early symptoms can be mild. The first sign is often an occasional attack where your fingertips become

white. Continued exposure to vibrating tools, will cause the symptoms to persist and worsen. During an attack your finger may become numb and tingle (like "pins and needles"). An attack may end with the whiteness in your fingers changing to a deep red flush, which is often painful.

#### Sensory nerve damage:

Damage to the nerves in your fingers will affect your sense of touch and temperature perception. You may also experience permanent numbness or tingling in your fingers. Damage to muscles, bones and joint may cause less strength in your hands and pain in your wrists and arms.

#### What Causes The Problem?

Many common tools and processes such as soil compactors, jackhammers and air powered tools produce high levels of vibration that can cause permanent damage to your hands and arms. The risk of permanent damage depends on a number of things:

- \* How severe the vibration levels are
- \* How tightly you grip the equipment
- \* How long you use the equipment for
- \* How cold and wet the environment is
- \* How awkward is the equipment to use

#### What Can I do To Reduce Risk?

Do your part:

- \* Tell your supervisor about tools or processes that produce high or increased levels of vibration
  - \* Cooperate with new ways of working that are developed to reduce risk. Give new work methods and tools a try, especially when the goal is to reduce your risk of exposure
  - \* Help maintain all tools and report tool problems
  - \* Use the right tool for the job
  - \* Don't use any more force than necessary when using tools or machines (an old adage is "let the tool do the work")
  - \* Try to avoid long periods of equipment use without a break
  - \* Keep your tools in good working order
  - \* Take an active part in the Safety and Health Program
  - \* Talk to your Safety and Health representatives
- It is important to keep your blood circulating while working so:
- \* Keep warm at work, especially your hands. Wear warm gloves and extra clothing if you work in the cold, because your blood circulation slows down when you are cold

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\* Don't smoke! Or at least cut down just before and while you are at work, because smoking affects blood flow

\* Exercise you hand and fingers to improve blood flow

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