

Topic: Driving Etiquette

Let's get started...

In the summer, many Americans “take to the road,” for driving vacations, or “road trips.” It is a time to be aware of the traffic laws and driving etiquette, both for safety reasons, and to make the trip more enjoyable and comfortable. What do you notice about driving in Washington State?

Background:

In the United States, every state establishes and enforces the laws for driving in that state. Although many of the rules are the same in every state, some rules are different. There are rules for every type of driving. Some drivers do not follow the rules, and this can cause accidents. Some people may not know the new laws that are passed after they take their driver's licensing tests, but, in the United States, “*ignorance of the law is no excuse.*” All drivers are required to know the new laws. Usually, the government publicizes the laws so people know what they should do or not do. For example, did you know that it is now illegal to talk on a hand-held cell phone while you are driving? The law will be enforced starting July 1, 2008. If you are stopped by a police officer for talking on your cell phone, you might have to pay a fine. It is okay to use a non-hand held head set attached to your cell phone.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

- Do you have a driver's license in Washington State? Do you have a driver's license from your native country? Are the rules for driving the same or different? What are some differences you have noticed, between driving in your country and driving in Seattle or around Washington State?
- What is your observation about drivers in Washington State? Have you seen drivers be very courteous and respectful? Have you seen any examples of “road rage”? Tell a partner about your observations and opinions.

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions: The basic “rules of the road” for Washington State can be located online through the **department of transportation website**.*

Some of the important rules to remember include:

- “Click it or ticket”;
- Child restraint rules;
- Cell Phone rules;
- Text messaging rules;
- “Ice & Snow, Take it Slow” – tire and chain regulations for winter weather;
- Cover your load, secure your load;
- Prohibited to leave a child under age 16 unattended in a car with the motor on;
- Prohibited for a person or animal to be unsecured outside a vehicle, on a hood, fender, running board, or “other outside part of any vehicle” where the animal or person might fall or be “thrown therefrom” (includes the back of pickup trucks);
- Prohibited to drive over a fire hose without the consent of the fire department officer in command;
- Prohibited to embrace another while driving, “which prohibits the free and unhampered operation of the vehicle.” This is considered reckless driving.
- Reckless driving – punishable by imprisonment for up to one year, plus a fine of up to \$5,000, plus mandatory suspension of the driver’s license for 30 days or more.

Do you listen to music when driving? Can this be distracting?

Do you eat while you drive? Can this be distracting?

Have you ever received a speeding ticket or a parking ticket? How much was the fine?

What are some penalties for driving infractions in your native country? How much are parking tickets in your country? How much are speeding tickets in your native country?

What are some driving rules in your native country? Does your native country have maximum speed laws? What are the maximum speeds?

What are some penalties (jail time or fines) for driving problems in your native country? Do you think the penalties are too harsh, too lenient, or about right? Do you think the penalties encourage most people to be safer drivers?

Are there problems with “road rage” in your native country? Have you ever seen an incident of “road rage” in your native country? If so, tell a partner what you saw.

Have you ever been pulled over by a policeman? In this country it is illegal to offer a policeman money. What about in your native country?

New words and Idioms: break the rules; right-of-way; “road rage”; “secure your load”; insurance; uninsured; organ donor; buckle up; “click it or ticket”; tailgate; defensive driving; “rules of the road”; “ice & snow, take it slow”; “close call”; distracting; embrace; mandatory; unhampered; reckless; fine; infraction; lenient; harsh; incident; “take to the road”; “road trip;” maximum; etiquette.

*www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/trafficoperations/traffic/rules.htm, and then click on RCW Chapter 46.61, which “provides the basic state laws that regulate the operation of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians on public roadways.”