

# Driving Hazards Observation

*New drivers should perfect hazard recognition while riding in a passenger seat prior to getting behind the wheel.*

Instructions:

- For 2 minutes, have a passenger listen to the driver as the driver calls out the potential hazards that they observe around their moving vehicle
- The passenger should mark each hazard on this worksheet as it is called out by the driver
- There should be no discussion between the driver and passenger during this observation
- After the vehicle has been parked, the observer should discuss the observation with the driver and note those areas that need improvement
- Count the total hazards recognized in the 2 minutes and record at the bottom

## Keep Your Eyes Out Front:

- Objects 12 seconds out in front \_\_\_\_\_
- Traffic zones \_\_\_\_\_
- Signals and Signs \_\_\_\_\_
- Pavement Markings \_\_\_\_\_
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_

## Intersections and Traffic Lights:

- Traffic Lights \_\_\_\_\_
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- Approaching vehicles \_\_\_\_\_

## Space Cushion:

- Maintains 4 second following time \_\_\_\_\_
- Space in front when stopped \_\_\_\_\_

## Left Intersection:

- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- Driveways \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking Lots \_\_\_\_\_

## Right Intersection:

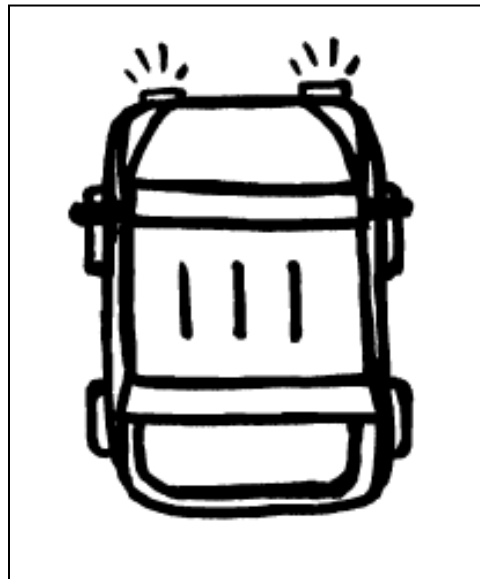
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- Driveways \_\_\_\_\_
- Parking Lots \_\_\_\_\_

## Left Side of Roadway:

- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Parked Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- Trees, bushes or objects near the road \_\_\_\_\_
- Eye contact \_\_\_\_\_

## Right Side of Roadway:

- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Parked Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- Trees, bushes or objects near the road \_\_\_\_\_
- Eye contact \_\_\_\_\_



## Left Mirror:

- Checks a mirror at least every 8 seconds \_\_\_\_\_
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- When changing lanes, uses blinker, mirror and turns head \_\_\_\_\_

## Middle Rearview Mirror:

- Checks a mirror at least every 8 seconds \_\_\_\_\_
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_

## Speed:

- Speed and Speed Limit \_\_\_\_\_
- Reasons to reduce speed \_\_\_\_\_

## Right Mirror:

- Checks a mirror at least every 8 seconds \_\_\_\_\_
- Pedestrians \_\_\_\_\_
- Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
- When changing lanes, uses blinker, mirror and turns head \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Hazards = \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **Before Starting the Engine:**

- Never drive impaired
- When approaching your parked vehicle, look in front, under and behind, scanning for any objects in your travel path
- Adjust the seat position and mirrors
- Verify that all occupants are belted-in
- Eliminate distractions prior to driving

#### **Keep Your Eyes Out Front:**

- Keep your eyes out front, aiming at an area at least 12 seconds ahead of your vehicle
- Remain patient in traffic
- Slow down when approaching work zones and school zones
- Stay centered in traffic lane
- Enter curves with an escape route in case another vehicle is in your lane
- If your wheel drops off the pavement, slow down and ease your way back on the road
- Recognize traffic signs by their shape
- Shift your eyes to different hazards every 2 seconds

#### **Intersection and Traffic Lights:**

- Look left, right, then left again before entering the intersection
- Always be prepared to stop, even if you have the right-of-way
- Obey all traffic signs, signals and pavement markings
- Don't assume that other drivers will obey the law
- Come to a full stop at stop signs
- Signal your intention to turn well in advance
- Watch closely for motorcyclists
- Don't underestimate the speed of approaching vehicles
- Apply right-turn-on-red correctly
- Stop behind stop line or crosswalk
- When entering highways, search for an open space to merge and establish your cushion

#### **Space Cushion:**

- Maintain a 4 second following time
- Use a space cushion to avoid sudden stops
- When stopped in traffic, leave a space with the car in front and count to 4 when that car starts up to establish your proper following distance
- Increase following time as speed increases or road conditions change
- Increase following time in inclement weather
- When another vehicle moves into the space cushion, back off to re-establish the proper following time.
- Stop when approaching a stopped school bus

#### **Middle Rearview Mirror:**

- Check one of your mirrors to follow-up on any hazard at least every 8 seconds
- Know what is happening behind your vehicle at all times
- Check to the rear when slowing or stopping
- Avoid all unnecessary backing
- Back immediately after scanning the area
- Continuously scan the area into which your vehicle is backing
- Back slowly and be aware of children

#### **Speed:**

- Do not speed! Know the speed limit
- Adjust your speed to varying road, weather and traffic conditions
- Slow down in areas where you expect pedestrians, such as in shopping centers and school lots
- Reduce your speed when entering curves

#### **Left Intersection:**

- Look left, right, then left again before entering the intersection
- Don't count on other drivers to obey the traffic laws
- Verify that all vehicles are stopping
- Be prepared to stop at all times, even if you have the right-of-way
- Watch for crossing pedestrians
- Get in proper lane well in advance
- Signal turn intention in advance
- Check traffic and turn when clear
- Turn into the left lane
- Turn at a safe speed
- Stay centered in your lane
- Distracted drivers may not be paying attention
- Shift your eyes to different hazards every 2 seconds

#### **Left Side of Roadway:**

- Watch for children that may step out into your path, especially in school surroundings
- When driving around parked vehicles, be prepared for pedestrians, especially children, around or exiting the vehicle
- Scan steering wheels of parked vehicles for driver activity
- Trees, bushes or objects near the road may hide animals or children
- Reduce your speed before entering curves
- Establish eye contact with other motorists and pedestrians
- Shift your eyes to different hazards every 2 seconds

#### **Left Mirror:**

- Check one of your mirrors to follow-up on any hazard at least every 8 seconds
- Know what is happening on the left side of your vehicle at all times
- When moving out away from the curb or when changing lanes – turn on your blinker, look into your mirror and turn your head to clear your path

#### **Right Intersection:**

- Look left, right, then left again before entering the intersection
- Don't count on other drivers to obey the traffic laws
- Verify that all vehicles are stopping
- Be prepared to stop at all times, even if you have the right-of-way
- Watch for crossing pedestrians
- Get in proper lane well in advance
- Signal turn intention in advance
- Turn into the right lane
- Turn at a safe speed
- Stay centered in your lane
- Distracted drivers may not be paying attention
- Shift your eyes to different hazards every 2 seconds

#### **Right Side of Roadway:**

- Watch for children that may step out into your path, especially in school surroundings
- When driving around parked vehicles, be prepared for pedestrians, especially children, around or exiting the vehicle
- Scan steering wheels of parked vehicles for driver activity
- Trees, bushes or objects near the road may hide animals or children
- Reduce your speed before entering curves
- Establish eye contact with other motorists and pedestrians
- Shift your eyes to different hazards every 2 seconds

#### **Right Mirror:**

- Check one of your mirrors to follow-up on any hazard at least every 8 seconds
- Know what is happening on the right side of your vehicle at all times
- When changing lanes – turn on your blinker, look into your mirror and turn your head to clear your path

# Hazard Recognition Checklist Explanation

As the Georgia Driver's Manual states:

*"The key to defensive driving is awareness. You must keep your eyes moving so that you can keep track of what is happening around you at all times."*

Driving is dangerous. But to a driver who recognizes and reacts to potential hazards in advance, auto accidents can be prevented. Our goal in defensive driving is to be prepared for the unexpected and react in the safest manner possible.

When a ball rolls into the street in front of our car, we try to avoid it. But, at the same time, we need to realize that the real hazard is in the direction from which the ball came, possibly where a child is playing. On a busy city street, drivers may face 20 – 30 different hazards per minute. Being able to recognize these hazards and respond accordingly is critical in the prevention of auto accidents. To keep track of what is happening around you at all times, you must shift your eyes every 2 - 3 seconds to each different hazard, concentrate on those of most importance, and plan your reaction if that hazard should cross your travel path.

The Hazard Recognition Checklist is used to develop and reinforce eye movement while focusing on the hazards that the driver will face behind the wheel. To ensure that eye movement is taking place, the driver should verbalize each hazard that they recognize. This should result in the driver understanding the concept of eye movement and hazard recognition. A passenger should document each hazard noted by the driver by marking it on the corresponding line on the Checklist. Establishing eye movement and voicing each hazard may be difficult at first but will become easier with a little practice. There should be no discussion between the driver and passenger during this observation.

The main areas of observation and some examples of comments that should be verbalized by the driver are outlined below:

For "**Keeping Your Eyes Out Front**", the driver should be looking at all of the potential hazards at least 12 seconds out in front of their car. They should be able to comment on any objects, traffic zones, signals and signs, pavement markings, pedestrians and other vehicles. This is the first step in planning the safest travel path.

For "**Left and Right Intersections / Intersections and Traffic Lights**", the driver should comment as they approach each intersection on any traffic lights or signs, any pedestrian movement, and the location and activity of any vehicles. They must also look left, right and left again to make sure that every intersection is safe before entering. Intersections include driveways and parking lots. Drivers should be prepared to stop at every intersection, even if they have the right-of-way. It doesn't matter who's right if someone is killed or injured in an accident.

For "**Space Cushion**", the driver should constantly comment on their following time and the space in front of their car. This is the only space that we have total control over. When we hit another car in the rear, it's usually because we're distracted. Maintain a 4 second following time and when someone pulls in front of you, back off and re-establish your 4 seconds.

For "**Left and Right Sides of the Roadway**", the driver should comment on the activity near their travel path, such as pedestrians, parked vehicles and trees, bushes or objects near the road that may hide hazards such as children or animals.

For "**Left, Right and Middle Rearview Mirrors**", the driver should comment on the activity they see in their mirrors. In most driving situations, they should be checking a mirror every 8 seconds to visualize the movement of vehicles behind their car. When changing lanes, a defensive driver should use their blinker, check their mirror and turn their head to be sure that any area not seen in the mirror is clear. Avoid all unnecessary backing and if you do back, check your mirrors, carefully watching for pedestrians and other vehicles.

For "**Speed**", the driver should always know their speed and the speed limit. They should also comment on those hazards that require reduction in speed, such as weather or road conditions. Speeding is a major cause of auto accidents and gives us less time to react to all of the hazards that we've recognized.

While we must react to the unexpected movement of other drivers, there are several accident-producing actions of which we have total control. **Before Starting the Engine**, we all must make a conscious decision to not become the cause for an auto accident. Never drive impaired. When approaching your parked vehicle, look in front, under and behind, scanning for any objects in your travel path. Eliminate distractions prior to driving. And to reduce deaths and injuries if an accident occurs, verify that all occupants are belted-in.

After the vehicle has been parked, the observer should total the hazards and discuss the observation with the driver, while noting those areas that need improvement. In auto safety, our goal should always be continuous improvement.

**New drivers should perfect hazard recognition while riding in a passenger seat prior to getting behind the wheel.**