

Road Rage

“Road rage” is not a new phenomenon. It is an exacerbation of good old “aggressive driving” which has been around since they introduced cars, or perhaps even from horse and buggy days. In the mid 1970s, during the fuel crisis and the long gas lines, we first saw it raise its ugly head more frequently. Frustrated drivers tried cutting into lines, only to be rebuffed, sometimes physically, by those already in the lines. Then in the 1980s, in larger metropolitan areas that often have heavy, slow-moving traffic, drivers sometimes used their vehicles as weapons – or actually carried real weapons – with which to threaten others. Today we are seeing a revitalization of this aggressiveness.

How Should You Deal With Road Rage?

With road rage there are two sides of the coin: you can be the aggressor/initiator or the recipient/victim. If someone else is having a bad day, that’s no reason for you to have a bad day. The most important action you can take is to put time and distance between you and the “rager.” Do not try to “get even” or “teach them a lesson” about their poor or abusive driving behavior. Don’t let your emotion or your ego get the better of good driving sense. Let it slide off your back. Ignore the other person – do not make eye contact. Do not blow your horn, shake your fist, or shout at the other driver. This type of behavior is sure to escalate the problem. Above all, do not pull over to the side of the road and get out of the car to confront the other driver – that response can place you in real jeopardy. When conditions permit, drive to a public area, such as a police station or convenience store. Do not drive home where you might be confronted alone. If you have a cellular phone, use it to call the police. Just the act of appearing to use the phone may discourage the aggressor.

Avoiding a Collision

After you have avoided the confrontation with the aggressive driver, you most likely will be a little “up tight”, on edge, under a “rush” of adrenaline. To avoid being involved in a collision, it’s necessary to relax and get your focus back on driving an “error-free” trip. In order to do this, take several deep breaths. Stop “thinking” about the incident. Force yourself to think about where you’re going, what you’re doing, or just the kind of day it is. Tune your radio station to relaxing music. If necessary, pull over to the side of the road for a few minutes, after assuring yourself the perpetrator is gone.

How to Prevent Yourself From Initiating Road Rage

Getting into a “fit of road rage” generally starts from being late, harried, rushed or having something go wrong with your day and then having

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another driver do something discourteous to you. On most days, you can overlook someone's cutting in front of you, or blowing his horn at you, or not allowing enough following distance behind you. But on *bad days* their poor behavior might just be "the straw that broke the camel's back." Instead of challenging them or getting even, *let it go*. Don't pick a fight!

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

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