



Providers of Commute Options for Middle Tennessee



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Looking Ahead Down the Road!

Keep your eyes UP and looking down the road. Many drivers focus on the road only 5 or 8 seconds ahead. You should be looking about 15-20 seconds ahead of your vehicle, farther if you can. This gives you the time to recognize and avoid most potential hazards before they become a problem. You'll see lane restrictions or construction areas, traffic congestion, truck entrances, mishaps, etc.

There are other important ways to use your vision as a key tool for safe driving. Drivers should see, and be mindful of, everything around them on both sides and for several hundred feet ahead (about two blocks) and also to the rear. Do this and you'll be able to see and avoid the immediate hazards others don't notice: balls rolling into the street followed by children, cars about to pull out from parallel parking,

pedestrians hidden between vehicles, runaway trucks bearing down on you from behind, etc.

Here's another tip. Don't concentrate on any one thing in your field of view for more than a second. Your focused field of vision is very narrow, less than 5 feet wide at 100 feet. Everything else you see is first picked up by your peripheral vision, which is effective at picking up motion but doesn't provide a clear view. If you don't believe this, hold your watch arm out to its full extension, and bend your wrist so you can look directly at your knuckles. Now, while staring at your knuckles, try to see what time it is without moving your eyes. While your watch is within your field of view, your view of it is unfocused. For the purposes of driving, you therefore need to keep your focused vision moving in a scanning "pattern" so that you

clearly see everything that may affect your progress.

The importance of your peripheral vision is that while it is not clear or focused, it detects movement—it is your "early warning" vision. If you allow your eyes to remain fixed on any one thing, your peripheral vision immediately begins to narrow down into "tunnel" vision—and you lose your ability to detect movement to the sides. Keeping your eyes moving prevents this from occurring.

Your vision is perhaps the most important tool you have while driving. Use it effectively! Look as far down the road as possible, and use a scanning motion to take in and analyze everything that is happening around you or close enough to be a hazard.



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DEFENSIVE ROAD RULES

The "Road Rules" *Van Voices* segment addresses defensive driving practices that every driver and passenger should know.

DRIVE PRECISELY!

Sloppy driving breeds mishaps! Most everyone knows the basics of the traffic laws; signaling, proper lane position for turns, turning into the proper lanes, complying with traffic signs (like "No U-Turns," "No right turn on red," etc.), driving to the right except when passing, passing across double yellow stripes, really STOPPING for stop signs, and many others. Drivers ignore them for the sake of expediency every day. We are so impatient to get about the details of our lives that we don't take the time to do it "right." One estimate I've seen is that average drivers commit 2.5 traffic violations every mile they drive! But, those pesky, nit-picky driving rules ARE important!

Here's an illustration of the concept applied to a different realm: the airport "traffic pattern." Occasionally in the news, a reporter will say that an aircraft crash happened because the airport had no air traffic controller, implying that it is simply chaos without one. But the fact is, uncontrolled airports are common in the aviation world and this isn't normally dangerous. ALL pilots learn basic rules for operating around airports - we enter and depart the area at set altitudes and at specific angles. We communicate our intentions to each other on special dedicated radio frequencies. We make turns in standard directions, either left or right, depending on the dictates of the airport's neighborhood. We learn where the dangers lie and how to avoid them. We keep a vigilant eye out for other air traffic, and we KNOW where to look for them because they are following the same rules we are. This process works because everyone learns the same rules and we all have a stake in doing it right. The result when someone doesn't do it right is often a smoking hole stuffed with twisted, scorched metal.



Why is it important to follow all the little rules that don't seem to make much difference? Because it works the same way in the motoring world. Traffic rules are in place to create the consistency and uniformity that allow us to predict with some degree of confidence what the other guy is going to do, thereby avoiding conflicts and collisions. Ignoring the rules of the road helps create the chaos you see every day. So, drive precisely, follow the rules, and watch out for the other guy!

-Road Trip America

URGENT!

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