

# Courteous and safe driving behaviour

## QFleet driver safety fact sheet

Courteous and safe driving behaviour significantly reduces the risk of road trauma. Good driving habits exhibited by drivers of government vehicles, both during and outside of work, provide benefits to the wider community and improve the overall safety of our roads.

When driving a work vehicle, it is likely that it is easily recognised as a government vehicle.

Drivers of government vehicles should display responsible driving behaviours, including:

- complying with the road rules
- being patient and courteous toward other road users
- using vehicle indicators long enough to give sufficient warning to other road users when turning or changing lanes
- following other vehicles at a safe distance i.e. not 'tailgating'
- strictly observing all speed limits, including those in restricted areas e.g. around schools, hospitals and roadworks
- allowing other vehicles to merge and change lanes
- accepting that all drivers make mistakes and avoiding aggressive or offensive behaviour
- having consideration for pedestrians, cyclists and livestock
- refraining from erratic driving practices e.g. excessive or aggressive lane changing, hard acceleration and braking
- parking legally and with regard to the needs of other road users.

## Sharing the roads

Safe drivers have increased levels of awareness of other road users and exhibit behaviours and courtesy to minimise the likelihood of incidents with other road user groups, including emergency service vehicles, cyclists, buses, heavy vehicles and trains.

## Police and emergency vehicles

Drivers are obliged to allow emergency vehicles which have sirens sounding or emergency lights operating, a clear and uninterrupted passage through traffic. The following should apply when encountering an emergency vehicle:

- don't panic
- reduce speed and merge left or stay left
- if it is not possible to move out of the way quickly and safely, remain calm and wait until it is safe to do so
- do not risk damaging the vehicle
- do not create a dangerous situation by moving suddenly or by performing illegal manoeuvres
- give way to emergency vehicles at intersections controlled by traffic lights even if the light is green

- be aware that there may be more than one emergency vehicle
- be cautious of other drivers who may panic and perform dangerous acts.

## Cyclists

When sharing the road with cyclists, drivers should:

- be patient and give cyclists the required clearance as stated in '[stay wider of the rider](#)'
- refrain from unnecessary horn blowing
- watch out for cyclists at intersections and roundabouts; most crashes with bicycles occur at intersections
- watch out for cyclists in residential streets, particularly near schools
- check behind the vehicle before opening the car door
- not drive in bicycles lanes
- give way to cyclists in bicycle lanes.



## Heavy vehicles

Heavy vehicles accelerate more slowly and require longer distances to stop than lighter vehicles. Drivers must exercise patience and safe driving habits when sharing the roads with heavy vehicles, including:

- following large vehicles at a safe distance while maintaining a vision of the road ahead of the heavy vehicle
- ensuring their vehicle can be seen in the heavy vehicle's rear vision mirrors so that the heavy vehicle driver can see them. If a driver cannot see the heavy vehicle's mirrors from behind, the heavy vehicle driver cannot see vehicles travelling behind
- estimating the length of a large vehicle before overtaking it. Overtake when there is enough

room and it is safe, preferably using an overtaking lane

- being very cautious when overtaking a truck in a left hand lane approaching an intersection; long vehicles displaying 'do not overtake turning vehicle' signs can legally turn left from a right hand lane
- not cutting in front of heavy vehicles, particularly when they are braking; they require longer braking distances than cars
- maintaining a constant speed if a heavy vehicle is overtaking the vehicle – do not speed up.

Drivers should take further precautions when sharing the road with a road train, particularly on remote roads, including:

- assessing the risk when needing to overtake a road train
- ensuring there is sufficient room to overtake at a sensible speed
- allowing that the road train will normally stay on the sealed section of the road
- flashing the headlights to signal an intention to overtake
- being cautious of potholes, poor road shoulders, guide posts and wildlife when leaving the sealed roadway to overtake a road train.

## Buses

Buses are also considered heavy vehicles; the same courtesy extended to heavy vehicles should be extended to buses. Drivers should be aware of the legal requirements regarding giving way to buses displaying a 'give way' sign when the bus is stopped or moving slowly and indicating that it is re-joining the traffic.



Drivers should also exercise caution around buses, especially when they are stopping or entering roundabouts. Buses may require

considerably more space to negotiate a roundabout.

## School buses

School buses can be identified by a SCHOOL BUS sign or a decal with an image of two children. School buses are fitted with flashing yellow warning lights which must be activated when the bus is picking up or setting down children. Exercise extra caution when sharing the road with a school bus; slow down and be very cautious when its yellow lights are flashing.



## Trains

There are more than 9,400 level crossings on public roads in Australia. Over 6,000 of these level crossings are not controlled by automatic lights or boom gates. Drivers need to exercise caution when in proximity to a level crossing by being:

- able to identify a level crossing
- prepared to stop safely and obey any traffic signs at the crossing
- alert and always expecting the possibility that a train may be approaching the crossing
- aware that trains can be travelling in either direction along the same track – and on multiple tracks – look both ways and be alert for more than one train passing through the crossing at the same time
- able to identify that a train is approaching. Don't be fooled by an optical illusion – trains in the distance are often closer and travelling faster than they appear
- able to judge the speed of the approaching train and assess a safe gap to cross in front of the train – never race a train to a railway crossing.

## Speed

Speeding is a major cause of serious and fatal vehicle crashes in Queensland. Every kilometre per hour over the speed limit not only affects whether a crash happens, but also how severe it is. It is against the law to driver faster than the posted speed limit, even when overtaking. At times, the safest driving speed may be well below the posted limit.

Drivers should reduce speed when:

- visibility, weather or road conditions are poor
- pedestrian activity (particularly children) is high
- livestock or other animals are on, or close to, the road
- the vehicle is heavily loaded or towing a trailer
- driving in or around hospitals, schools and roadworks.

Risks involved with speeding include:

- increased risk of being involved in a crash where someone is injured or killed
- less time to react to hazards e.g. a child suddenly running onto the road
- the driver is more likely to lose control of the vehicle, e.g. on a curve
- increased stopping distance e.g. in optimal conditions, a vehicle travelling at 60 km/h would come to an almost complete stop in approximately 45 metres. Examples of the implications of travelling faster than the speed limit on stopping distances are shown in the Department of Transport and Main Roads diagram on the next page.

## Following distance

Drivers need a safety space or 'buffer zone' around the vehicle. If other vehicles are following too closely and the driver ahead brakes suddenly, the following vehicle may not have enough distance to stop safely, which may result in a rear-end crash.

- Use the time-lapse method or two second rule to keep a safe following distance by selecting a point on the left hand side of the road e.g. a power pole. When the rear of the vehicle ahead passes the object, the following

driver should allow at least two seconds between their vehicle and the vehicle in front. To determine a safe stopping distance, the following driver needs to count ‘one thousand one, one thousand two’ and if the front of the vehicle passes the object before the count is finished, the vehicle is too close.

- Two seconds is the recommended minimum following distance when driving a vehicle in ideal conditions. However, be aware if conditions are not ideal, four to six seconds may be required.
- If towing a trailer, allow one extra second for each three metres of length of the trailer.
- Heavy vehicles need to allow a following distances of up to five seconds.

For the full suite of QFleet Driver Safety Fact sheets visit [qfleet.qld.gov.au](http://qfleet.qld.gov.au)

### How long it takes to stop (driving an average family car)

