

Managing aggressive drivers and road rage

QFleet driver safety fact sheet

Road safety research is finding that the frequency of aggressive driving and road rage incidents is increasing and appears to be linked to the increased congestions on our roads and highways.

Aggressive driver behaviour is contributing to crashes and physical conflict between road users. Some forms of aggressive driving are both dangerous and illegal. Behaviours such as tailgating, speeding and erratic lane changing are traffic offences and are punishable under the *Traffic Act*.

Road rage is criminal behaviour and is very dangerous. Road rage is the violence or threatened violence resulting from a road user's uncontrolled anger over an incident. Crashes and personal attacks are often the outcome.

A good, safe driver knows that they cannot control traffic conditions or behaviour of other drivers, but they do know how to control their own emotions and reactions. A good way to avoid the aggressive behaviour of other drivers is to drive in a manner which is the least likely to attract confrontation. A driver who exhibits courteous and safe driving behaviours is less likely to aggravate other drivers who may be stressed, short-tempered, impatient or inconsiderate. Courteous and safe driving behaviours include:

- driving in accordance with the road rules



- driving in a way that is predictable by others
- not queuing across (blocking) intersections
- timely use of indicators to give plenty of warning
- giving way to others when joining traffic
- not following too closely (tailgating)
- changing lanes correctly with ample warning
- not driving too slowly in the overtaking lane
- allowing others to overtake or to merge into the traffic
- not flashing your headlights or using your horn needlessly
- not making or returning rude gestures to other drivers.

Consider this

Driving involves a high degree of trust; people who do not know each other routinely engage in life or death cooperation.

If a driver becomes the target of another aggressive driver, there are some actions that can be taken to help to defuse the situation.

- If a driver makes a mistake while driving, they should admit it and try to signal an apology to the other driver.
- If another driver makes a mistake or becomes aggressive, do not take it personally and do not retaliate.
- Recognise that an aggressive driver is just unleashing their anger on the rest of the world and not at a driver specifically. Don't personalise the incident.
- Remain polite and courteous, even when others are not.
- Avoid eye contact with the aggressive driver.
- If the other driver is in front of your vehicle, slow down a little to increase the gap between the vehicles.
- If the other driver is tailgating your vehicle, maintain a steady speed or pull over in a safe place and let them pass.
- Do not get out of the vehicle.
- If being harassed by another driver and being followed, do not go home. Go to the nearest police station.



If a driver has difficulty controlling their temper and emotions while driving, there are a number of things that can be done to help control this behaviour:

- Remember that safety is the number one concern and drive safely. Safe driving will ensure that drivers do not do something they may regret and will not incite others to do the same.
- Accept the fact that mistakes occur. Accept that everyone makes mistakes and perhaps what was perceived as an aggressive act was a simple mistake.
- Use good manners. Screaming, swearing, shaking your fist, making obscene hand gestures or engaging in a retaliatory display of unsafe driving will only make a bad situation worse.
- Drive defensively and learn to expect the unexpected.
- Allow enough time for the journey. Running late builds unneeded stress.
- Refuse to allow another driver – someone unknown who may never be seen again – to dictate mood and influence the quality of the day.
- A driver should leave personal problems behind when entering a vehicle.
- Remember that only police officers have the job of punishing others for poor driving.
- To control anger and a desire to retaliate, focus on breathing. Pay attention to each breath as it goes in and out and maintain a normal breathing rhythm.
- If emotions cannot be controlled, find a safe place to pull over, stop and unwind.
- Consult a doctor. Road rage and the inability to control emotions may be symptomatic of other health disorders.
- Take down the registration details and report the incident to the police when safe to do so.

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