

Keeping Emotions in Check While Driving

By Ralph Simantel

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A special “thank you” for the contributions made by Rebecca Bowder

As a TLC Transportation Supervisor for the Portland-Vancouver area, I conduct regular safety meetings with all the drivers that I oversee. These meetings serve to educate and update drivers on TLC safety protocol and procedures. During our most recent meeting, I was proud to announce that for the last quarter our region was accident and injury free! This was a huge improvement from our previous quarter. We were showing great progress and I was very interested in the reasons behind the improvement and how our group could maintain this record.

I asked everyone in our meeting for their thoughts on why the team was showing such a vast improvement in driver safety. One driver, Rebecca answered, “I started following that one key thing that you said; I check in with myself periodically throughout the day. I take a moment to evaluate my emotional state to make sure I’m not too hurried to becoming agitated about my route each day.” Many of the other drivers nodded in agreement with this simple, but very important measure.

Rebecca was referring to a safety presentation I gave back in October that was a little different from our usual discussions that focus on safety procedures, injury prevention, and other proactive accident prevention programs. A few years ago, I attended a powerful training seminar that really resonated with me and I decided to share the theory with the group. The focus of the presentation was how the best and safest drivers consistently kept their emotional state ‘in check.’

I made a very interesting observation; that knowing the safety procedure backwards and forwards was not directly correlated to a driver’s safety record. A key difference lies with a drivers’ ability to keep his or her emotions in control. Rebecca made a new habit of “checking in with herself” throughout the day, which she believed helped her make significant improvements as a driver. She also found that this technique helped her become more receptive to the safety training and motivated her to continually work on improving her driving skills. This is a great “win-win” outcome!

As Steve Vlahos, General Manager and “Serious About Safety” guru stated, “repetitive procedures and actions produce consistent results.” I believe the safety training that we do is very valuable, but if we aren’t consistently “checking in” and remaining calm and collected, we are missing an essential ingredient. I would encourage all drivers to make a habit of “checking in with themselves throughout the day.” Rebecca, thanks for the great suggestion and something that we should all make part of our daily routines!

