



Tailgate Topic # 5 - Check Your Following Distance

Pretty much all rear end collisions can be prevented by maintaining a safe following distance from the vehicle in front of you.



The Question for this Meeting:

What is a safe following distance and how can you check that you are leaving enough room?

Tailgate Answer:

The only way to accurately check your following distance is by using the 'time interval formula' which works by picking a fixed landmark, like a sign or some other stationary object, and counting seconds as the vehicle in front of you passes it. The number of seconds that you count is your time interval.

Under the best conditions, the minimum number of seconds needs to be 2, or more as conditions change or deteriorate.

Question:

Why is this so important?

Tailgate Answer:

Stopping distance is a combination of reaction distance and braking distance. Reaction distance is the distance that your vehicle travels from the time you see a reason to apply brakes to when you actually move your foot to the brake pedal and begin to slow down. If you are too close to the vehicle in front, you will hit them **NO MATTER HOW GOOD A DRIVER YOU ARE** because you can only get to the brake as fast as a human can move and by the time you get there, if the guy in front is already breaking hard, you don't have a chance.

Continued...



What are some conditions that would require an increase in following distance?

Tailgate Tips:

- Weather conditions; like rain, snow or other weather problems
- Road condition; such as gravel or broken up pavement or other problems with the road. In slippery conditions, such as snow, ice or on wet pavement, much more space is advisable.
- Lighting condition; at night or if you are looking into reflected sun or glare, you need more space because you will not see things as easily.
- Traffic conditions; as traffic gets heavier, you need to stay aware of much more than in light traffic, this occupies your attention so more space in front buys you more time to react.
- **YOUR** condition; if you are tired or otherwise not 100%, leave more space because your reactions may not be as quick.

Practical Challenge:

As you drive today, count your time intervals and see just how much space you are actually leaving. Make adjustments as necessary and practise re-adjusting. Pretty soon, you will be able to judge the distance accurately and will only need to check once in a while!

Let's all have a safe day!

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