

SAFETYFIRST

INFORMATION DEDICATED TO DRIVER SAFETY

AHEAD OF
THE CURVE

Safety Management
Services Company, 2010

An affiliate of
Cottingham & Butler

Be Safe Out There

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Cottingham & Butler
TRANSPORTATION GROUP

Rear-End Collisions

Space-Cushion

“Rear-end” collisions are a major problem. They represent one-quarter of all accidents. You can minimize the likelihood of being involved in a rear-end collision by maintaining a space-cushion that is appropriate for the driving conditions.

A proper space-cushion must provide you time to see and recognize a hazard and make a decision regarding what should be done. Then, there must be adequate space to bring your vehicle to a stop. For “normal” driving on dry roads, a car or van needs a two-second space-cushion, a bus or truck requires three seconds, and a tractor-trailer must have four seconds. If driving over 40 mph, you need to add one second to the above rule, and if driving on wet or slippery roads, another second must be added.

Measure Your Space-Cushion

Measuring the space-cushion is easy. When the vehicle ahead in your lane passes a highway mark, start counting – one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three. If you arrive at the same point before you finish counting, you don't have an adequate space-cushion and need to allow more room between your vehicle and the one ahead.

To have a safe following distance and minimize the likelihood of rear-end collisions, the space-cushion concept must be followed all of the time – during stop-and-go, rush-hour traffic as well as while traveling on the interstate or rural highways. At slower speeds, a two-second space-cushion doesn't require as much distance as it does at higher speeds and consequently, you can maintain it relatively easy even in slow-moving traffic (at 15 mph, two seconds equates to 22'; while at 40 mph, two seconds equates to 58').

Maintain Your Space-Cushion

Some people argue that you can't maintain a proper space-cushion when traffic is heavy and fast like you might find on interstates near major metropolitan areas (i.e.: Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, or New York). The truth of the matter is that unless you are one of those in the left-hand, “fast” lane trying to “make time,” it **is possible** to keep a safe following distance, have an adequate space-cushion, and be less frustrated and tense at the end of your drive.

Anyone can maintain the proper space-cushion if he/she really wants to and works at it. Safe driving doesn't happen by accident--**you** make it happen. Get in the habit of always using the proper following distance when driving.

Drive defensively!