Introduction to Decision Driving

Have you ever been in a traffic situation that forced you to make a panic stop? Or, to make a sudden swerve in another direction?

What can you do when forced to make a decision with too little information? How much of your best thinking can you do in, say three seconds?

This is the spot many drivers get themselves into. Time and again they must make sudden decisions to try to avoid an accident because they haven’t been taught or haven’t been practiced DECISION DRIVING. We all consider ourselves good drivers, although most of us are not as good as we think. When we consider that each year we kill over 50,000 Americans and seriously injure over 2 million in vehicle accidents, it proves conclusively that there are many of us who make improper of poor decisions.

Most experienced drivers believe that their experience alone qualifies them as good drivers. Experience alone does not always teach us those things that are required to make sound, well-timed decisions.

DECISION DRIVING is a course designed for drivers who have the wisdom to recognize the need to improve their driving skills. It is a method of instruction, training and practical application which can help most anyone make sound, well-timed decisions.

Most accident situations are repetitious. Once drivers are trained how to make certain key responses, they can come up with the right decision almost every time.

This is why we call DECISION DRIVING the positive approach to safe driving.
DECISION DRIVING as we’ve discussed is the positive approach to safe driving. How do we become a Decision Driver? Well, the three factors that contribute toward becoming a better driver are knowing **what to do, how to do it, and when to do it**. Let’s focus on these areas.

“What to do” can be illustrated by our knowledge of the rules of the road and traffic laws. Knowing this information can avoid serious trouble. We should continually keep ourselves informed about new rules and regulations that govern the driving task.

“How to do it” or the skill factor involves the operation of the vehicle – steering, gear selection, speed control, braking, etc. This requires mechanical coordination, or a physical input by the driver. Decision Drivers know their limitations and those of the vehicle.

The knowledge and skill factors are required for licensing, and most drivers accomplish them fairly well.

“When to do it” or decision-making comes by applying knowledge and skill which is arrived at through attitude, training and experience. This is the most important of the three steps.

Very few drivers realize how many decisions have to be made while driving. They’re almost constant. And – they have to be right. The wrong decision – or indecision – on the highway becomes costly.
the good Knows...

WHAT to do (knowledge)
Rules of the road

HOW to do it (skill)
Mechanical co-ordination

WHEN to do it (decision-making)
Training and experience
Drivers tend to blame their accidents on weather conditions, mechanical defects, the other drivers or traffic conditions. Most drivers are reluctant to admit a driving error.

The actual facts are, that approximately 95% of all vehicle accidents are caused by *indecision* or *poor decisions* on the part of drivers. Even those accidents that result from mechanical defects can usually be traced to a poor decision on the driver's part. For example, a driver that decides to continue driving on bald tires ignores failing brakes, has made a poor decision.

Indecision – can be brought about by not knowing what to do or how to do it. It is waiting too long to take action, especially in emergency situations.

A poor driving decision – is one that leads to an accident, creates a hazard for others or violates the rules of the road, all of which create problems in the driving environment.

But, by practicing DECISION DRIVING you learn to automatically make the right decision in spite of the road condition – or the traffic – or the weather – or the other driver.

DECISION DRIVING will help develop decision-making ability and eliminate indecision and keep poor decisions to a minimum.

Remember, drivers – not vehicles – make decisions.
True Causes of Vehicle Accidents

95% indecision or poor decisions

improve Decision-making Through Training

5% mechanical failure

Drivers not vehicles make decisions
CRITICAL TYPES OF ACCIDENTS

Most decisions can be made on the basis of patterns developed from past experience. Much of DECISION DRIVING will be the selection of the appropriate pattern and applying it to the problem coming up on the road. Research reveals that drivers who are accident repeaters keep making the same mistakes or poor decisions over and over.

Here are the critical types of vehicle accidents that past experience reveals will continue to cause most of the fatalities and serious injuries: 1) Hit other in rear, 2) intersections, 3) head-on collisions, and 4) pedestrians and cyclists.

Liberty Mutual studies show that these type accidents, while representing only 32% of all commercial fleet accidents, account for nearly 60% of the losses. According to The national Safety Council, these four types account for 52% of all vehicle related fatalities.

In most of these accidents it is evident that one or both drivers went beyond the risk – taking limit. In other words, they made poor driving decisions and wound up in accidents.
types of accidents

* rear-end collisions

* intersection collisions

* head-on collisions

* pedestrians & cyclists

* CRITICAL-high severity = deaths...injuries...dollars
THE FIVE SENSES

Of the 5 major senses, - Seeing, Hearing and Feeling – account for over 95% of everything we learn.

In the driving task our actions and reactions are performed by the hands and feet, but, they are the result of our decisions. Our decisions result from mental evaluation of pictures seen through the eyes, sounds heard through the ears and feelings felt through the body.

These senses, however, cannot result in a decision until the mind has recognized them. Seeing requires conscious effort. The eye and the mind must work together like a fast moving camera snapping and developing conscious streams of new pictures each second, and the pictures being developed into decisions.
THE FIVE SENSES

- SEEING
- HEARING
- FEELING
- Smelling
- Tasting
SEEING

Psychologists agree that over 80% of all learning comes through the Seeing sense. The senses of Hearing and Feeling are also important in DECISION DRIVING but not nearly as important as the Seeing sense. This is why Decision Drivers must cultivate their Seeing skills.

The eye has two abilities. The first we know as Fringe Vision. This is seeing out of the corner or our eyes. Fringe Vision is hazy and out of focus, but it does pick up movement and light. It is used for scanning, and alerts one to objects and hazards that should be brought into sharp focus of the clear Central Vision; the three-degree cone that sends sharply focused pictures to the mind.

As speed increases, Fringe Vision range narrows rapidly. Airplane pilots have to turn their heads to see other aircraft approaching from the sides because speed almost completely erases their Fringe Vision. Drivers of vehicles should also turn their heads from side to side to take advantage of their clear Central Vision. This will help spot vehicles, people, animals, etc. approaching from the sides, allowing enough time for decision action.

Until an object is viewed with the Central Vision, it cannot be identified clearly enough to make an accurate decision.

Many people look, but do not see, because they stare. Staring is the deadly condition that comes with preoccupation and inattention when looking but not seeing. But, the main thing is we can’t make good decisions if we don’t fully utilize our Seeing sense.
SEEING... how the eye works

80% of knowledge is gained through seeing
HEARING

The Hearing process follows much the same pattern as Seeing, in that the mind must get the sound clearly before it will affect our decisions. Hearing is an alerting sense in driving. In learning, Hearing accounts for about 7% of all the knowledge we gain. In DECISION DRIVING it accounts for at least this amount.

The sense of Hearing is employed in two ways - - communicating with others and having others communicate with us. It has historically been a means of warning people of danger they cannot readily see or feel. Year after year hundreds of motorists are killed at railroad crossings even though it has been proven that the engineer was blowing the engine whistle. Sirens on police cars, fire engines and ambulances are directed at our Hearing sense. Our sense of Hearing warns us to react. We can make better driving decisions if we listen effectively.

Keeping the windows tightly closed or driving with the radio blaring can cancel out his sense. Learn to recognize and react to warning sounds - - screeching tires, horns, bells, sirens, and unusual noises.
Hearing... helps make decisions

- Improve communications with others
- Warns of hazards
- Supports visual information

7% of knowledge gained through hearing
The third sense utilized in DECISION DRIVING is the sense of Feeling. This is an important sense because it can warn of a very serious emergency situation developing that cannot be seen or heard but can be felt.

We previously talked about the 4 critical types of accidents: intersection collisions, hit others in rear, pedestrians and cyclists, and head-on collisions. In one out of every 4 of these type accidents, skidding was a major contributing factor, sometimes as a result of wet roads caused by rain. You see the wet road, but you Feel the skid developing and if you don’t react to the Feeling by staying off the gas, stabbing the brakes and counter-steering, you may wind up in an accident.

You can also feel the loss of brakes, unstable steering, a flat tire or loss of acceleration.

These Feelings usually come through your hands, feet or the seat of your pants. Make sure you heed these warnings and learn what decisions to make when your sense of Feeling alerts you to developing emergency situations.
FEELING...
alerts us to instability

- Skidding action
- Loss of brakes
- Unstable steering
- Underinflated tires
- Slippery road conditions
- Loss of acceleration

Feeling alerts us to driving situations we cannot see or hear
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Modern computers are designed to enable us to make good decisions quickly. The human brain is the oldest and handiest computer ever devised. Everyone has one. It is built in. It is our decision-making machine – and like a computer, the output depends on the input.

The input is dependent upon the three major senses; seeing, hearing and feeling. From these, we feed our computer – the brain – information needed to make sound driving decisions. The more we understand and practice this concept, the better we can utilize information and facts to help make good driving decisions. This is a continuous process.

Then comes the output, or action. It is the most important part of DECISION DRIVING. We have processed all the information we have seen, hear, or felt on the basis of our knowledge, training, experience and attitude. Now we have made a decision, or decisions, and taken action.

This is the pay-off. The better we apply what we have learned, the better our driving actions will be, and the fewer accidents and driving delays we will experience.
the DECISION-MAKING process

input \leftrightarrow \text{SEEING HEARING FEELING}

knowledge-training experience-attitude

DECISIONS

output
THE 5 STEP DECISION DRIVING SEQUENCE

Here is the 5 step pattern which will improve your DECISION DRIVING performance and skill.

1. Expand your “look-ahead” capacity
2. Size up the whole scene
3. Signal your intentions early
4. Plan an escape route
5. Take decisive action

Let’s look at each step individually
the \textbf{5 STEP decision driving sequence}

1. Expand your "look-ahead" capacity
2. Size up the whole scene
3. Signal your intentions early
4. Plan an escape route
5. Take decisive action
EXPAND YOUR LOOK-AHEAD CAPACITY

Expand your ability to see far enough ahead where you will be within the next few seconds. Potential problems developing in the next block will be full-grown hazards within a few seconds. Give yourself the extra seconds needed to make good driving decisions by expanding your field of vision.

It is easy to identify drivers that are not using their look-ahead capacity. They speed up to a red light and screech to a halt to avoid rear-ending the vehicle ahead. They have to suddenly veer left to avoid objects on the right side of the road. They fail to reduce speed when visibility is poor.

Expanding your look-ahead capacity helps in many ways.

− Keep your vehicle properly centered in the driving lane
− Allows time for proper lane selection
− Helps in adjusting to changing traffic conditions
− Adjust to an adequate following distance
− Blend smoothly into the existing traffic pattern
expands your
"Look-Ahead"
capacity

Short-sighted steering prohibits good decisions

Tailgaters live in a world of surprises

develop lead-time

See far enough - make a decision - take proper action
SIZE UP THE WHOLE SCENE

The more facts that are fed into the mind, the less chance there is of making a poor decision. This is expanding your input. By constantly sweeping your eyes over the whole scene, you keep transmitting messages to the brain for decision-making. God decisions are based upon the ability to:

- Note changing road and weather conditions
- Spotting problems facing other drivers
- Note the changing of traffic patterns
- Know what's beside and behind you

Don't stare at anything longer than two seconds. Keep glancing far ahead, near, and to the sides. This will eliminate the fixed and blank stare.

Check the mirrors every five to ten seconds. Find out what's behind you. At intersections look left and right and left again. Make sure the intersection is clear.

To make sure you can see, keep the windshields, side windows and mirrors clean.

So eliminate the need for split second decisions. Keep yourself constantly informed by sizing up the whole scene.
SIZE UP the whole scene

weather? behind?

WHAT'S far?

visibility? beside?

the road condition?

EXPAND your input
SIGNAL YOUR INTENTIONS EARLY

Good decisions are not foolproof if we don't let other drivers and pedestrians know our intentions about the action we have decided to take.

Signaling is imperative to DECISION DRIVING and should be automatic. Develop it into such a habit pattern that you would signal even though you are on a deserted highway. In addition to automatically using your turn signals, you should signal any change in speed or direction that will affect other drivers or pedestrians. Use a hand signal or tap your brake pedal a few times for the sudden slowdowns or stops in heavy traffic or on expressways. Sound your horn with a friendly tap before passing or backing up. In addition, blinking your lights at night lets others know or your presence.

Signaling not only warns others of the decision you have made but it also calls attention to your presence; and the sooner the better.

Communication in incomplete unless it goes both ways, from the sender to the receiver and feedback if possible. Being aware of others is only half of it; you have to make sure they are aware of you too.

Use your turn signals eight to ten seconds before you begin to turn. Use the horn. Make eye contact. Avoid driving in blind spots. Establish contact with other drivers and pedestrians, and stay in touch.
SIGNAL
your intentions early

lights
road positioning
speed change
friendly horn
hand signals
eye contact with pedestrians & cyclists
	urn signals

Help others make
GOOD DECISIONS
PLAN AN ESCAPE ROUTE

Many times making a decision that leaves you without an alternative is like picking your own poison. It’s pretty hard to choose between two consequences when you don’t want either of them to happen…and it’s easy to be quick and decisive when a planned escape path, a saving decision, is open to you.

Keep a Stopping Space – To keep your stopping space, evaluate your position in traffic continuously

Be Prepared to Yield – Learn to spot traps. Blind intersections are traps. Driving into them at high speeds because you have the green light, leaves you without an alternative if the person coming out of the blind are is color blind – sick – or drunk. But if you go into such intersections with your foot off the gas, and resting on the brake pedal you have an escape space – you can stop.

Stay out of Tailgating Traps – Following the car ahead too closely is setting up a trap without an escape path. This is especially true if the car behind is tailgating and you're “boxed in” by cars on both sides. The car ahead jams on the brakes and you are sandwiched – no escape path – bam! Disaster.

Time Your Passing Moves – Head-On collisions caused by too little passing distance occurs because drivers shut off their escape path by trying to pass a line of vehicles on 2 or 3 lane highway without good visibility. They often don’t have any place to go except into eternity.

When traffic traps are building up – plan an escape route – this makes a decision easy. And not just easy, but possible.

Don’t be a sitting duck for disaster. Safety in most driving situations is only a few feet away, on an escape path, off the collision course.

Give yourself time – space – and visibility.
- Keep stopping space open
- Be prepared to yield
- Stay out of tailgating traps
- Time your passing moves

GIVE YOURSELF TIME · SPACE · VISIBILITY
TAKE DECISIVE ACTION

This is the pay-off. It’s the sum of all the input obtained through expanding your look ahead capacity, sizing up the whole scene, signaling, and planning an escape route. All of which gives one the knowledge and skill to make good decisions.

Knowing it not enough, you have to practice DECISION DRIVING in order to develop these skills.
take decisive ACTION OUTPUT Action Taken Based On Skill

Knowing is Not Enough ... Doing Gets The Job Done
IT’S A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Remember, in today’s driving a driver has to make more than 100 driving decisions per mile in moderate city traffic. This means you have hundreds of chances to make good decisions.

So, don’t assume anything! Expect others to make poor decisions or be indecisive. Then, if and when they do, you'll be ready for them because you have followed the DECISION DRIVING continuous process and:

- Expand your look-ahead capacity,
- Sized up the whole scene,
- Signaled your intentions early,
- Planned an escape route, and
- Taken decisive action.

This is DECISION DRIVING – the positive Approach to Safe Driving.
Don't Assume Anything

1. Expand your “look-ahead” capacity
2. Size up the whole scene
3. Signal your intentions early
4. Plan an escape route
5. Take decisive action

This is DECISION DRIVING