

OBJECTIVE 2.3 Identify the effects that attitudes and emotions have upon law enforcement driving.

## INTRODUCTION

When the student realizes the effects that attitude and emotion have upon driving habits and the decision-making process, there will be changes in performance that result in safer and more effective driving. To accomplish this realization, a student will need to be led through an evaluation of current habits and values and be taught how to change them.

Suggested topics to include in the discussion:

1. Emotions
2. Attentiveness
3. Willingness to improve

## CONTENT

### 1. EMOTIONS

- a. Emotions such as fear, love, hate anxiety, surprise, joy and excitement have a profound effect on behavior in general and on driving in particular. Emotions can affect the part of the brain which controls thought, reason, and judgment. Strong emotions affect certain bodily functions. Some effects are temporary: heart beats faster, face flushes, breathing speeds up, blood pressure rises, muscles become tense. Repeated extreme emotions can lead to long-term dysfunctions such as changes in appetite, digestive chemical changes, and ulcers. Emotions can have a distracting and paralyzing effect upon driving. These effects can include:

- (1) dim or blind powers of observation
- (2) delay or distortion of ability to interpret events
- (3) reduction of powers to assess and predict the actions of other highway users
- (4) production of faulty judgment and high-risk decisions
- (5) reduced ability to perform precisely timed skills



- b. Emotion can be a positive force in determining driving behavior:
  - (1) Reasoned fear of crash or legal consequences helps to restrain unsafe tendencies
  - (2) Love that an officer has for family and friends can motivate one to drive safely
  - (3) Desire to perform successfully can result in safer driving
- c. The degree to which a driver is beset by emotional problems, along with the effectiveness of the means used to cope with these problems, has a bearing on the potential for a collision.

## 2. ATTENTIVENESS - CAUSES OF DISTRACTIONS

- a. There are many distracting factors that compete for the driver's attention. Driving a law enforcement vehicle is demanding in and of itself because the officer is performing the task of driving and the duties of an officer at the same time. It is important that good habits be developed to allow for safe movement through a traffic situation during the performance of police-related duties.
- b. Distraction from the driving task is caused by:
  - (1) thinking of things other than driving
  - (2) having the vehicle distractions which require the driver's attention
  - (3) situations outside the vehicle that attract the operator's attention
  - (4) environmental factors
  - (5) vehicle factors
  - (6) route problems in unfamiliar areas
  - (7) seeing one potential collision hazard at the traffic scene while failing to see another

## c. How to minimize the distractions

To minimize the distracting factors and to maximize the driver's attention to the most critical elements of the traffic scene requires:

- (1) attention to be distributed over large areas without concentrating on any one part for more than two seconds
- (2) the ability to search ahead of the vehicle and the ability to recognize traffic scenes that have deteriorated or that reduce space control such as the following:
  - (a) Brake lights ahead
  - (b) Traffic ahead switching lanes
  - (c) Traffic light changes from green to red
  - (d) Crossing traffic at an intersection
  - (e) Pedestrians or bicycles alongside the road
  - (f) Vehicle backing out of a driveway
  - (g) Child running toward the street

**3. WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE - THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE UNLESS THERE IS MOTIVATION**

The most important part of training is the transfer of learning activities into a real-world situation by the students. For the driver training process to have any positive effect, there must be a clear understanding of what driving behavior is desirable. A plan needs to be devised to develop in each student the concepts and skills of good driving habits. Practice on the part of the student must take place often enough to allow the recommended behaviors to replace poor driving habits. Without a willingness to improve, very few positive results will take place from the training.

**SUMMARY**

## THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The effects of emotions, the attentiveness of the driver, and the willingness to improve are central themes underlying the positive results of the driver training course. It is important for the student to understand that a willingness to change habits is necessary in order to change high-risk actions into low-risk habits.

**SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY****LECTURE**

Present examples of law enforcement-related collisions to the groups and explain how improper attitudes and lack of emotional control contributed to the collision. Use of transparencies or the chalkboard will aid in diagramming the crashes. Ask the group for opinions as to how the collisions could have been avoided with better attitudes or increased emotional control.

**SMALL GROUP**

1. Divide the class into groups of 3-6 students. Ask the groups to list examples of emotions that can affect one's decision-making abilities, even if not related to driving. Then ask the students to explain how the same emotions can surface while driving and describe the effects that emotions are likely to have upon their driving performance. After individual groups formulate their responses, the instructor can ask each group to explain their findings to the class.
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-6 students. Ask the groups to list examples and state conditions relative to where and why law enforcement officers will find it difficult to concentrate, easy to become emotional, and easy to accept inappropriate risk. List their group responses and define what attitude adjustments will be required to make positive changes.

**INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING**

Ask the students to formulate a personal plan, to be submitted to the instructor on the last day of training that defines which concepts and skills covered during the training course will be most important for them to practice. Students should also state how the practice will take place.

**RESOURCES AND AIDS**

1. Psychology magazines and articles
2. Psychology textbooks
3. Guests lectures experienced in emotional and attitudinal control
4. Newspaper articles or case law involving collisions that demonstrate emotional factors as contributing to the collision

**SUGGESTED EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

**STUDENTS**

1. Written or verbal response to questions concentrating on emotions, attentiveness, and willingness to improve
2. Observation of behavior during simulated scenarios
3. Observation of behavior during driving activities

**COURSE**

Observation of behavior during on-the-job performance.

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# Emotions

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- Production of faulty judgement and high-risk decisions
- Reduced ability to perform precisely timed skills