

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Aggressive Driving: Research Update

The Problem:

- Surveys consistently show people believe aggressive driving is one of the most serious traffic safety problems.
- However, many of the same people reported driving in ways that could be classified as aggressive, which is the essence of the AAA Foundation's "Do as I say, not as I do" critique of the traffic safety culture in the United States.
 - In the AAA Foundation's Traffic Safety Culture Index, 78 percent of respondents rated aggressive drivers as a serious or extremely serious traffic safety problem, yet nearly half of those surveyed reported exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on major highways in the past 30 days.
 - These drivers also admitted having performed numerous other aggressive acts, including exceeding the speed limit by 15 mph on neighborhood streets (15%), speeding up to beat a yellow light (58%), honking at other drivers (41%), pressuring other drivers to speed up (26%), tailgating (22%), and deliberately running red lights (6%).

The Research:

- Analyzed the prevalence of aggressive driving in fatal motor vehicle accidents by using the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's *Fatality Analysis Reporting System* (FARS) data.
- Driver-related contributing factors are coded in FARS based on police crash report forms.
- The factors that are typically associated with aggressive driving (speeding, tailgating, erratic lane changing, etc.) were analyzed.

Key Points:

- As many as 56 percent of fatal crashes involve one or more unsafe driving behaviors typically associated with aggressive driving.
- Driving in excess of the speed limit or too fast for conditions is a major part of aggressive driving and a contributing factor in nearly one of every three fatal crashes.
- AAFTS ideal definition of aggressive driving would include both driver behavior and intention, however current crash data does not consider intent.
- "Do as I say, not as I do" attitude still prevalent so it's very important for drivers to honestly assess their own driving practices.
- Helping motorists understand the risks of aggressive driving and other inappropriate behaviors is a vital first step in achieving a positive traffic safety culture.

Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.

