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## Preventing Road Rage

If you haven't heard or seen anything about Road Rage in the last few months, you've probably been avoiding the media. There have been countless stories about this new and scary phenomenon. Road rage is considered a type of aggressive driving. You have most likely encountered aggressive driving and/or road rage recently if you drive at all.

While drunk driving remains a critical problem, the facts about aggressive driving are surely as ominous. For instance, according to the NHTSA, 41,907 people died on the highways last year. Of those fatalities, the agency estimates that about two-thirds were caused at least in part by aggressive driving behavior.

Why has road rage surfaced on our roadways? And why is this phenomenon occurring more than ever now, and why is it something that seemed almost nonexistent a few short years ago? Experts have several theories, and all are probably partially correct. One suggestion is sheer overcrowding. In the last decade the number of cars on the roads have increased by over 11 percent and the number of miles driven has increased by 35 percent, however, the number of new road miles has only increased by one percent. That means more cars in the same amount of space. And the problem is magnified in urban areas. Also, people have less time, and more things to do. With busy working parents trying to fit extra chores and activities into the day, stress levels have never been higher. Stress creates anxiety, which leads to short tempers. These factors, when combined in certain situations, can spell road rage.

Are you immune to road rage? You may think you are the last person who would drive aggressively, but you might be surprised. For instance, have you ever tailgated a slower driver, honked long and hard at another car, or sped up to keep another driver from passing? If you recognize yourself in any of these situations, watch out!

Whether you are getting angry at other drivers, or another driver is visibly upset with you, there are things you can do to avoid any major confrontations. If you are susceptible to road rage, the key is to discharge your emotion in a healthy way. And if you are the target of another driver's rage, do everything possible to get away from the other driver safely, including avoiding eye contact, and getting out of their way.

Even though the problem of Road Rage may seem daunting, there are large-scale preventative measures currently underway to reduce the risk of aggressive driving and related fatalities. For instance, there is a major push to inform and educate the public about the problem, to improve enforcement techniques designed to punish and deter aggression, and to design safer roads.

Allstate, through its work as a member of the Coalition for Consumer Health and Safety, (CCHS) is helping to turn the tide on aggressive driving. According to CCHS, unsafe driving reflects not just the irresponsible behavior of a small minority of all drivers, but the slow erosion of safe, courteous driving standards among the majority of all drivers. A recent survey sponsored by the CCHS showed that most people consider courteous driving as safe driving. In addition, the survey results found ten discourteous driving practices to be unsafe. In response, CCHS recently introduced a "courteous driving campaign." By disseminating information about the dangers of aggressive driving, and 10

tips on driving courteously, we hope to teach drivers about the value of driving carefully and courteously.

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