* **Defensive Driving Techniques**

**Looking Ahead**

Your focus when driving should be all encompassing. Not only should you be aware of what's in front of you by looking 10 to 15 seconds ahead, but you should also pay attention to traffic behind and next to you. Check your mirrors often. Anticipate potential hazards. Be aware of signs and signals.

**Driver Fatigue**

Driving when you're tired is dangerous. Reaction times are slower. Concentration wanes. Focus dims. And, ultimately, dozing occurs. To avoid any of these symptoms you should rest every two hours and limit your driving to six to eight hours a day. Or, for short term relief, consider drinking coffee, chewing gum, listening to the radio, and driving with a window open.

**Road Rage**

Just because you're in Louisiana does not mean you should champion the term "Ragin' Cajun" when behind the wheel. Road rage is not only a criminal offense; it also jeopardizes the safety of every motorist around you.

To curb road rage try to avoid "anger-igniting" situations by driving the speed limit, maintaining safe distances with the vehicles in front of you, and allowing for plenty of time to reach your destination.

If you're the target of a driver's wrath don't attempt to confront or escalate through hand gestures or voicing opinion through your car horn. Instead, keep your distance and attempt, if possible, to alert the police.

**Hydroplaning**

Hydroplaning refers to when your tires lose contact with the pavement due to water on the road, causing your vehicle to swerve out of control. It, in southern terms, is like skidding on "soft ice."

Hydroplaning becomes a factor when you reach 35 mph. The faster you drive above 35 mph the greater are your chances of hydroplaning occurring. To avoid, slow down when driving in rain or when you see standing water on the road.

Ease off the gas pedal if you sense hydroplaning starting to occur and try to keep the car straight. Do not slam the brakes or attempt to make a sudden turn. Only apply the brakes when you feel your vehicle is back under control.

**Passing**

You can only pass, obviously, when you are certain your car won't cause oncoming traffic to veer madly off the road. When you do pass make sure to use proper turn signals and that you do so in a manner that does not crowd the vehicle you're passing.

You should never pass under the following circumstances:

* + When within 100 feet of an intersection, bridge, or tunnel.
  + When your view is blocked by a hill or curve.
  + When your lane is marked with a solid yellow line.

Passing on the right is only legal if you're driving on a highway with two or more lanes in the same direction. It is illegal to pass any vehicle by using the shoulder of the road.