Welcome. I'm Ed Finnegan with Risk Management Services at DOAS the State of Georgia.

DOAS and Risk Management want to provide all employees and agencies a list of best practices and guidelines for when you might be called upon to represent the State. That is exactly what you are doing each time you drive a State vehicle or use your personal vehicles to do State business.

We want to make sure that all of us are aware of what is expected by the State of Georgia. We've developed a list of do’s and don'ts but before we go over them, remember that while your agency may have some concerns if you fail to comply with their practices, these recommendations have no connection with coverage issues. This is about changing habits and using the best practices as opposed to driving from memory. Here is an example, when you learn how to drive, they probably told you to hold your hands at 10 o’clock and 2 o’clock, now the best practice is nine and three. The reason is that studies demonstrated an increase in driver arm injuries since the advent of air bags, so for your safety this is a better idea.

But let's look at some larger issues, the first one is distraction. A Virginia Tech study estimates that 80% of all accident involves some type of distraction.

### Dan’s Role Play

This is Dan. Take another look, how many can you identify?

Dan seems to come with his own set of distractions. Other distractions are already in the vehicle. We usually call them options: air-conditioning, radio, heated seats, sunroof, recharging outlets and CD players- all things that take our minds off our main job, driving.

Let’s watch…seems a bit distracted. Is this the way you drive? Is this the way you want the person next to you to drive? The one the drops off the kids or takes a relative to the doctor’s appointment?

In a National Safety Council survey of 30,000 drivers, when given categories of excellent, above-average, average, below average and poor, 90% describe themselves as above-average or better. Is that your experience on the roads? Probably not.

Let's go back to Dan. I think he is about to start driving. Dan did not have a clue what was behind his vehicle because he relied solely on his mirrors. There are blind spots all around your vehicle. The bigger the vehicle, the larger the area cannot see.

Your environment changes constantly with people and objects coming into and leaving the area near your vehicle. Before you back up, go back there and make sure you know what the hazards are.

Here’s what he failed to understand, backing accounts for less than 1% of our driving but over 30% of our accidents. We do not do a good job backing. We you need to change our habits. Here’s what he failed to see, most backing accidents involve hitting fixed objects but many involve moving cars and pedestrians.

The cost to the State for these types of preventable accidents is extremely high but the cost in
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terms of injuries can be much greater. Try to avoid backing but if you have to back, get out and look. Use your flashers, tap your horn and back slowly.

Dan is going to try to go for now. Not so good Dan. You can save the State four million dollars next year. That's money that stays in the pot for salaries, programs and jobs. Interested? Avoid those quick starts and stops. They are not only unsafe but it's estimated that driving that way waste a gallon of gas each day for each vehicle. We have approximately 18,000 vehicles in our fleet, times 220 workdays, times a dollar per gallon, equals $3.9 million. And when was the last time you paid a dollar per gallon?

Marlene’s Role Play

Dan is not helping but you can take a look at Marlene. Marlene is interested in safety and it starts as she approaches the vehicle. First, she wants to look over the van. She does not drive the same one each day so she needs to be aware of the features of this particular model. How high is it? It has a large step on the passenger side. Are there any objects under or near the tires it could be a hazard? And what is in the area? Objects? An overhang? Children? She knows because she approached the vehicle from the passenger side and took the few seconds necessary to get a good overall view of the area. She's not bringing in any distractions into the vehicle. Once inside, she’s all about safety: seat belts for everyone, adjust the mirrors, scan the area. She has a plan to exit and off she goes, no quick start or stops, just a safe even pace, nice job Marlene!

Following too Closely

One of our most frequently repeated accidents is the result of following too closely. These accidents have three common factors and they are all completely within your control. Distraction, we've already talked about those. Speed, the single most common element found in accidents. Thirty five miles an hour means 35 miles an hour. Just stay back four seconds and you will never have a rear-end accident again. It's as easy as Georgia 1234.

Rear-end accidents happen in all types of situations: at intersections where we failed to leave enough distance behind the stopped vehicle front of us, on side streets, where we speed up just to wait, on the highway where we tailgate trying to get the other driver's to go faster than they want to. Speed and distance, drive at a good speed for the situation.

Do not exceed speed limit. To make sure you're following distance is greater than your stopping distance; pick out a stationery object when the vehicle in front of you passes it. Start counting: Georgia one, Georgia two, Georgia three, Georgia four. At that moment you should be passing the same fixed object.

This is what it looks like: see that overpass up there? That's four seconds, I'm driving the speed limit and have left plenty of room to handle emergencies and avoid rear-end collisions. Try it again: start counting, it's simple and it will work every time. Here it is working on a city street.

So what are the rules? What are the Don’ts?

- Do not use a cell phone when operating any vehicle on State business; pullover to answer it.
- Do not use drive-through or drive-up windows in the State vehicle. It's hard to judge that
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- Do not operate any vehicle on behalf of the State unless all passengers are secured by seat belts.
- Do not eat or drink while operating any vehicle on behalf of the State.
- Do not smoke while operating a state vehicle.
- Do not use headphones.
- Do not wear flip-flops or shoes with extremely high heels; don't let that be a distraction.
- Do not pass on a two-lane road; plan for the unexpected and be patient.

Finally, remember do not use State vehicles for personal business. To check on what's covered, see our safety coverage video at www.DOAS@Georgia.gov.

We talked earlier about changing habits, and I would guess that all of us have done some or most of the don'ts we just listed.

It's not about taking out the ones we agree with but rather modifying our behavior to conform to these best practices. We owe our best to our families that depend us to get home safely, to our coworkers we transport, to all of our passengers, and to the citizens of Georgia.

Thanks for taking this time to consider our recommendations and thanks to Dan Osment and Marlene Butler for their help… and remember be careful and be safe.