



## INFORMATION YOU SHOULD KNOW

## MAINTAIN A SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCE

One of the most frequent and severe claims in the human services field is the result of one vehicle rear-ending another. Rear-ending claims are often caused by improper following distance. Following distance is the distance between your vehicle and the one ahead of you, and it is the easiest defensive driving technique for a driver to implement.

### THE THREE-SECOND RULE

There is no rule set in stone about a safe following distance. The safest way to calculate safe following distance is to follow the “three-second rule.”

To determine the right following distance, select a fixed object on the road ahead such as a sign, tree or overpass. When the vehicle ahead of you passes the object, slowly count one one thousand, two one thousand, three one thousand. If you reach the object before completing the count, you’re following too closely. Making sure there are three seconds between you and the car ahead gives you time and distance to respond to possible hazards you may approach.

### EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

- Vans, pick-ups, and SUVs should use a following distance of four seconds.
- In heavy traffic, at night, or when weather conditions are not ideal for example, light rain, light fog, or light snow; double the three second rule to six seconds for added safety.
- If the weather conditions are very poor, (heavy rain, heavy fog, or heavy snow) triple the three second rule to nine seconds.

### TAILGATING

Tailgating is an aggressive driving behavior that is easily mistaken for road rage. Use the three-second rule to avoid tailgating. Most rear end collisions are caused by the vehicle in back following too closely. If there is a vehicle tailgating you, take the three seconds the driver behind you is not using, and add it to your three seconds, increasing the distance to six seconds. This increases spacing between you and the car in front. This will also allow you to decrease speed without causing the car behind to run into the rear of your vehicle. If possible, change lanes and allow the tailgating vehicle to pass you.

### ADDITIONAL TIPS

These following distance rules assume that your vehicle is in safe operating condition. Worn tires or brakes that are not working properly can reduce your ability to stop. Prior to starting any trip, it is important to complete a pre-trip inspection. Promptly report any problems.

Remember to observe everything going on around you. Check your mirrors every 3-5 seconds, scan ahead, and be aware of what lies in your blind spots. By knowing what is going on around you, you can adjust your following distance accordingly.

Contact the ISA Risk Management Division today for more information on these and other risk management services and resources.