

## Stacked Up



**T**raffic congestion continues to worsen in American cities of all sizes across the country. Abnormally high traffic creates congestion, causing all lanes of travel to slow or even stop. Congestion can be caused by a crash scene, a vehicle stranded in the travel lane due to a mechanical breakdown, or by drivers slowing to look at a crash scene on the opposite side of the highway - rubberneckers.

### WHY THE INCREASE?

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), some of the factors that lead to congestion include:

- **Demand** – The volume of vehicles continues to climb, but the miles of roadway do not. As employment rates rise and commuters travel farther to work, the congestion will only increase. Over the course of twenty years route miles of highways increased 1.5 percent while vehicle miles of travel increased 76 percent.
- **Tolling** – Toll roads continue to create bottlenecks at toll plazas; however, electronic tolling is having a positive effect.
- **Increasing freight and courier shipments** – As the economy warms up, there will be more cargo moving along the same traffic lanes shared by commuters. Most everything we buy or use in our homes/offices was delivered to either the store or our homes/offices by a truck.
- **Traffic Signal Timing** -- Signal timing should correspond to the current traffic patterns. Often signals are initially timed, but not re-adjusted when traffic patterns change. This results in inefficiency and unnecessary delays.
- **Work Zones** – Maintenance and repairs to bridges and roads must be carried out but it can't all be done at night; therefore, lane closures slow traffic along miles of road each day.
- **Traffic Incident Management** -- Traffic incident management is a combination of public safety functions and traffic management functions. It

requires cooperation between various public agencies to reduce congestion by clearing traffic crashes and removing stalled vehicles.

Occasionally, this can contribute to congestion when coordination between agencies is inefficient.

### HANDLING CONGESTION

- Plan your trips with an eye towards avoiding congested routes at peak times.
- Use 5-1-1 services, web sites and other electronic alerts (traffic cams, radio station reports, etc.) to chart the path of least resistance.
- Stay calm when stalled in traffic – aggressive driving (i.e. cutting people off in aggressive lane change maneuvers, weaving in traffic, tailgating, etc.) can lead to serious collisions.
- Stay focused – pay attention. It may seem obvious, but many rear-ender crashes happen when someone is distracted, notices the traffic start to move, and rams into the vehicle in front of them.
- Minimize your lane changing to avoid blind spot collisions. Find a lane and try to stick with it unless it becomes closed and then merge with caution.
- Don't rubberneck – if you see a crash scene or other emergency on the other side of the road, try to stay focused on your own lane of travel instead of slowing down the traffic that's already stacked up behind you.
- Pull over quickly and completely if you have a problem. Get off of the travel lanes and call for help.
- Don't respond or react to aggressive drivers – let them move on.

### CONSEQUENCES

Traffic congestion costs society a lot of time and money. It creates longer trips, fuel inefficiency and frustrated motorists. But it doesn't have to contribute to a crash. When you're behind the wheel make a plan to avoid congestion and stay calm and focused when stuck in heavy traffic. Safe driving is every operator's responsibility.

October, 2018  
*The Shield*  
Stacked Up  
Quiz



Driver Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print

Driver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. The volume of vehicles continues \_\_\_\_\_, but the miles of roadway do not.
  - a. to decrease
  - b. to climb
  - c. to worsen
  - d. all of the above
2. Which is not a factor that leads to congestion?
  - a. The volume of vehicles
  - b. The size of vehicles
  - c. Repair of bridges and roads
  - d. None of the above
3. Often signals are initially timed, but not re-adjusted when traffic patterns change.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Minimize your lane changing to avoid \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. blind spot collisions
  - b. engine inefficiency
  - c. HOS violations
  - d. all of the above
5. Traffic congestion creates longer trips, fuel inefficiency and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. inexperienced drivers
  - b. failed inspections
  - c. frustrated motorists
  - d. none of the above

