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***Is it crazy out there on our roads? You bet! Do the cars and trucks seem to be getting faster, sleeker & more expensive, even with our fluctuating gas prices? Yes! We take a risk everytime we sit behind the wheel of a vehicle, and will perform one of the most dangerous acts in our lifetime when we drive.***

***This is not meant to scare you, just to realize how important driver education is by learning good defensive driving skills and behavior to keep us safe out there. You may feel powerless sometimes about driving and avoiding conflicts, but you can start feeling safe by evaluating your own driving and using "perfect driving" as a standard...This means that you complete every trip without accidents, traffic violations, vehicle abuse, schedule delays and discourtesy to other drivers. It also means being a better driver than everyone one else, not just an average one...all of these describe your attitude as a driver, which, in many ways, is more important than skills, weather, road, light, car, and other road users...it can get you into trouble in a blink of an eye. Perfect driving or defensive driving means to operate a motor vehicle to prevent a collisions regardless of the actions around you and the condition I just mentioned, and being prepared to give the right-of-way even if the other driver is at fault.***

***Another big part of driving is taking a pro-active approach to driving not a re-active approach...this means recognizing a potential hazard or situation ahead of time, think about what could happen, understanding the defence you might have to take, and "act" in time to protect yourself. I personally strongly believe in this...I never, even after driving for over 30 years, drive with a "wait an see" attitude. Through good habits, I am constantly evaluating the scene around me, front and back, and have avoided many minor and potentially major problems by doing this, anything from stopping on a yellow light, to avoiding a head on collision, to avoiding a skid.***

*Taking a pro-active attitude and knowing how to react certainly takes skill as a driver. This can be learned through driver training, from a good driver, and from experience as a driver. I always say learn basic good driving habits, and it will keep you safe all of your driving life. Some of them are:*

- 1. Always communicate, by signaling when turning or changing direction, using day lights and even full lights during the day, and putting on your full lights 1 hr. before sunset and at night time and in adverse conditions..*
- 2. Always shoulder check. There are blind spots around your vehicle that your mirrors do not cover, so everytime you either put your signal light on, or change direction, look over your shoulder in that direction...this does not mean you turn your body around, or look for a couple of seconds, it means turning your head very quickly and resting your chin on your shoulder for a split second, then back again...yes, you will see something, your peripheral view will take care of it, and you will re-look if an object is there.*
- 3. Having a "good cushion" space around your vehicle. This means following 2 secs. behind another vehicle...4 secs. in adverse conditions, large truck or motor rv, motor cycle and bike. It also means making sure anyone behind you is doing the same , and beside you.*
- 4. Pro-active attitude ( as mentioned).*
- 5. Knowing when not to drive or driving at a different time of day.*
- 6. Never taking unnecessary risks.*
- 7. Learning how to drive in winter & adverse conditions in stages and consider driver training.*

### *Pedestrian,bicycle & motor cycle safety:*

*Now that spring is here, we see more & more of the above, and need to be ready to yield to these road users or compensate for their mistakes. Some points to remember:- pedestrians always have the right-of-way at marked or un-marked intersections, but must abide by the rules also. Legally a driver is supposed to wait until a pedestrian has crossed all the way before proceeding. Pedestrians should wear protective clothing at night time and walk facing the*

*traffic. With bikes & motor cycles, treat them as a full size vehicle, and they must, in return, abide by the same rules. I realize this is not always the case, so drive defensively and be prepared for their mistakes. We do offer motor cycle training, but need to have 8 registered students to hold it. If a driver wants their motor cycle license, they can also take a course in Calgary: E-Z Riders - 403 281-6919. Testing is conducted in Canmore & Banff at both registries office:  
678-9320 & 762-2177. (thursdays)*

## Licensing for Driving Instructors

*A common myth is that driving instructors are just another driver with no special training or skills, and all it takes to be a good instructor is "nerves of steel"! yes, they need this, but who doesn't when driving with a beginner or inexperienced driver. But driving instructors are special people; not only do they need many years of experience driving and a professional license to even be considered for an instructor, they must also take an extensive course of training, set up by Alberta Transportation.*

*This training involves a 1 hr. theory test where they need to know all about the highway traffic act, drivers manual for all classes, policies & procedures for driving schools, and pass with an 80%; Then they need to do a 3 hour road test with an examiner from the driver training dept. in Calgary; this involves 6 modules of learning, pre-trip, start & stop, turns, backing, parking, & commentary driving. Completion of the course can take up 6 months. An instructor also needs good people skills, patience, organization & maturity. My theory of an instructor is:*

*1 part teacher, 1 part driver and 1 part psychologist...and most importantly, a passion for the job. So many times over the years I have sat with a student and tried to analyze why they had, either problems learning, problems not wanting to learn, problems separate from driving that had to be addressed so that they could concentrate on the skills at hand, or problems with the road test and reasons why they were not ready, or thought they were ready, or needed more practice.*

*The examiner usually gets all the credit for passing a driver, but the instructor does all the hard work preparing them.  
I am very proud of all my instructors!*