CHAPTER 4: Making Safe Driving Decisions: The IPDE Process

4-2 Identify and Predict

Objectives: • Describe the location of each of the six zones of the Zone Control System.
• Explain what is meant by an open zone and a closed zone.
• Describe an orderly visual search pattern.
• Explain how knowledge and experience help you make accurate predictions.

New Vocabulary: central vision, closed zone, field of vision, 4-6 second range, ground viewing, identify, line of sight, open zone, orderly visual search pattern, path of travel, peripheral vision, predict, scanning, target area, target area range, traction, 12-15 second range, zone

The Identify and Predict steps of the IPDE Process are critical in every driving environment. With practice and experience, these steps will seem to occur in your thinking process as happening almost at the same time.

I. Identify - This first step involves much more than just seeing. When you identify, you give meaning to what you see. You must know when to look, where and how to look, and what to look for. Any part of the HTS can become a hazard, the roadway, your vehicle, other vehicles or pedestrians, and traffic controls. The quicker you identify a possible hazard, you’ll have more time to react safely.

A. Zones and Searching Ranges - A zone is one of six areas of space around a vehicle that is the width of a lane and extends as far as the driver can see.

1. Front Zone
2. Left-Front Zone
3. Right-Front Zone
4. Left-Rear Zone
5. Right-Rear Zone
6. Rear Zone

An open zone is space where you can drive without a restriction to your line of sight or to your intended path of travel. Your line of sight is the distance you can see ahead in the direction you are looking. Your intended path of travel is the space your vehicle will occupy. Your path of travel is directed toward the target area, which is the section of the roadway where the target is located in the center of your intended path, and the area to its right and left. A closed zone is a space not open to you because of a restriction in your line of sight or intended path of travel.

A. Orderly Visual Search Pattern - A process of searching critical areas in a regular sequence.

Here is an example of an OVSP for straight ahead driving. All glances should last only an instant. Once your pattern becomes habit it will be adjustable for any maneuver or driving environment.
DRIVER EDUCATION NOTES

1. Glance ahead
2. Check rearview mirror
3. Glance ahead again
4. Search the sides of the roadway, intersection, and driveways
5. Glance ahead again
6. Check speedometer and gauges
7. Glance ahead again

B. Where and How to Look- Use the Smith System to help develop your visual search habits and protect yourself from the unsafe actions of others.

1. Aim High in Steering - To “aim high” means to look far ahead as you drive. In city traffic, look at least one block ahead. On highways and expressways, look as far ahead as possible. Look through curves, and identify conditions and possible hazards in the distance.
2. Keep Your Eyes Moving - Glance near and far, right and left, in the mirrors, and at the instrument panel. Be sure to look ahead again after each glance.
3. Get the Big Picture - Mental process of putting together the critical clues that your eyes selected and identified as they scanned.
4. Make Sure Others See You - Communicate with other drivers. You can communicate your presence and intentions by using your lights, horn, car position, eye contact, and body movement.
5. Leave Yourself an Out - Means you have identified an escape path in case of a possible conflict. You constantly adjust position to keep space around your vehicle in the changing traffic conditions.

C. What to Look For - Use selective seeing in your identifying process. This means that you select and identify only those events and clues that pertain to your driving task.

D. Search for Specific Clues - Use your visual search pattern to look for specific driving related clues. Don’t allow your eyes to stay to long on any one thing. Try to develop the art scanning – continual glancing through your visual search pattern.

E. Look for Other Roadway Users - Look for different sizes and shapes of vehicles. Develop the habit of ground viewing in your search pattern, this means to quickly glance at the roadway in front of your vehicle.

F. Look for Roadway Features and Conditions - Identify intersections, hills, and curves early. Be aware that the width of your lane might be reduced. (Examples)

1. Changes from multilane to single lane.
2. Change in width of lane.
3. Roadside Hazards - pedestrians, bicyclists, parked cars, animals.
4. Roadway Surface - potholes, bumps, weather conditions such as ice rain, and snow.

G. Look for Traffic Controls - Learn to look in different places for traffic controls. Identify early so you are able to make the correct responses.

II. Predict - You interpret the information you have identified and see how this hazard might create a conflict. Predictions are based on 3 elements in the traffic scene. 1. The actions of other roadway users. 2. Your control of your vehicle. 3. The consequences of your actions.

A. Actions of Other Roadway Users
   1. Path - Where might the other driver go? What possible paths might be taken?
   2. Action - What action will the other roadway user take? Is more than one action possible?
   3. Timing - When will the action be taken? Where might I be then?
   4. Space - Will some of my planned space be used?
   5. Point of Conflict - Where might our paths cross?

B. Predicting Control of Your Vehicle and Possible Consequences - Speed is the most important factor in maintaining control of your vehicle. Always be prepared to adjust your speed for varying conditions and situations. At times, you will need to accelerate rather than brake in order to avoid a conflict. Determine all the alternatives of a situation and choose the best action.

Review It
1. What is the location of each of the six zones of the Zone Control System?
2. What is an open zone and a closed zone?
3. Give an example of an orderly visual search pattern.
4. What effects do knowledge and experience have on your ability to make accurate predictions?