

# ROAD RAGE: Top 10 driver infractions that make our blood boil

BY JOE FANTAUZZI  
jfantauzzi@yrmg.com

They make your blood boil, your brow furrow and strain your vocal chords.

We've all seen them.

The driver who floors his four-cylinder coupe through every gear to make the left as the arrow flashes from green to amber to, well... nothing.

Or, maybe the sport utility driver, 20 minutes late, who enters a busy intersection even though three-quarters of her truck will be sticking out into live traffic when the light turns red.

Or, how about the guy on the highway who sees the sign saying the lane is going to end.

And then sees the lane ending.

And then punches the gas and forces himself in front of you, nearly tearing to shreds your bumper and patience in the process.

And, finally, waves to thank you for letting him in.

York Region is home to some of the Greater Toronto Area's most courteous and skillful drivers.

But, in a region where car is king, it also wasn't very hard to compile a Top 10 list of driving habits that are dangerous, baffling and downright rude.

## Cellphone Chatters

Drivers on hand-held devices continue to be a "huge problem" for York Regional Police, traffic bureau commander Staff Sgt. Brad Bulmer said.

Often, they putter along slower than the flow of traffic and that's because they're distracted, he noted.

Despite a \$155 fine that goes along with being caught, which police have been slapping on drivers since February 1, 2010, 5,393 tickets for distracted driving have been issued for the offence in York Region.

## Merge Blockers

You've experienced this driver not allowing you to merge onto the highway by speeding up or slowing down as you try to enter.

But, the onus, for the most part, does fall on the merging driver to get into traffic safely, Ontario Provincial Police Const. Ken Upton said. And there are scenarios in which a merging driver could be charged if they strike a vehicle while trying to enter the highway, although witness statements that report aggressive driving will be taken into consideration, Const. Upton noted.

## Lane Marauders

These drivers make right turns from through lanes because



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

It wasn't difficult to compile a list of driving habits that are dangerous and rude.

they're too impatient to wait for their turn in traffic. It's a problem because often the intersections at which it occurs are too small to accommodate two vehicles turning right at the same time.

Also included: drivers who make wide turns with the intention of overtaking a slower motorist ahead of them that is still in the process of making a turn (ex: 'Driver A' turns left into the left lane of a multi-vehicle road. Driver B, impatiently, makes the same left, but pulls into the curb lane, overtakes 'Driver A' and then changes lanes in front of 'Driver A').

## Life In The Fast Lanes

These drivers can slow down traffic for kilometres at a time by travelling at a speed noticeably slower than the flow of traffic while in the lanes expected to be kept clear for faster vehicles.

"It is one of those offences that upsets the public," Const. Upton acknowledges.

## Gridlockers

Gridlock occurs when vehicles enter an intersection but can't exit and often results in cars facing one

## BAD DRIVING CHARGES

- ▶ Speeding: 64,116
- ▶ Red light: 1,466
- ▶ Disobeying stop sign: 5,542
- ▶ Careless driving: 2,181
- ▶ Property damage collisions: 16,457
- ▶ Street racing: 3
- ▶ Evade police: 42
- ▶ Impaired driving: 906
- ▶ Dangerous driving: 252

— source: York Regional Police Statistical Report January - December 2010

direction blocking vehicles from travelling in other directions.

Local bylaws forbid a motorist from entering an intersection unless he or she believes getting through it is likely, Staff Sgt. Bulmer said.

"Traffic volumes are high enough without paralyzing the

flow," he noted.

And drivers who gridlock won't get where they're going any quicker but will cause frustration in their fellow motorists, he added.

Crashes associated with gridlock are rare, he noted.

## Highway Lane Hoppers

Some of the most common calls Ontario Provincial Police receives to its communications centre are complaints about speeders darting in an out of traffic while cutting people off, Const. Upton said.

"It's a problem and it elevates the percentage of being in a serious crash," he said.

Also included: the driver who knows a lane is ending, but instead of finding a spot in traffic right away, races to the end of the lane and forces themselves in.

## Stop Sign Rollers

These are typically impatient drivers who, while looking for oncoming traffic, don't stop at a stop sign and slide around a right turn.

This behaviour can be very dangerous for pedestrians waiting

to cross the road, Staff Sgt. Bulmer said.

Not stopping for a stop sign is an offence, 5,542 drivers across the region were reminded last year. If you're caught, you'll receive a \$110 ticket.

## Highway Hooligans

These motorists speed, tailgate and even pass you on the left shoulder if you dare to drive slower than the optimum speed they've decided upon. It's out there, so don't think you've left the bully behind in the school yard.

As recently as last month, Ontario Provincial Police launched a crackdown on aggressive driving, impaired driving, seat-belt compliance and distracted driving.

## Middle Slot Scallywags

This behaviour is often seen during periods of heavy traffic volume, when drivers encounter long lines of traffic before an intersection.

If this driver needs to make a left, he or she can often be spotted cruising down the road's middle slot, designed to be shared for left turns off the roadway, quickly to the lights.

"People are now using that as a through lane," Staff Sgt. Bulmer said, adding the lanes are a relatively new addition to York's roads, with the first having appeared about a decade ago.

## Light Runners

This is not just inconsiderate, it can be very dangerous, police say.

Sure, it's aggravating when you are staring at a stale green light and waiting for the third or fourth car to finish the left turn in front of you.

They're the ones who figure there is room for just one more car. And so does the driver behind them. And the driver behind them. And, well, you get the picture.

But, a lot of collisions at intersections occur on amber lights where someone is making a left, Staff Sgt. Bulmer warned.

An amber light does not mean slow down and proceed with caution — it means stop if you can safely, he said.

Disobeying a red light will result in a \$260 fine plus a \$60 victims of crime surcharge, plus a \$5 court cost, for a grand total of \$325.

Meanwhile, if you're caught disobeying an amber light, you'll face a \$150 fine, plus the \$25 surcharge and \$5 court costs, making a total of \$180.

Both offences are three demerit points, as well.