Road Rage: History, Manifestations and Implications

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Angry or aggressive behavior acted out by a motorist is referred to as â€œroad rage.â€• The typical behavior includes yelling, verbal insults and threats, rude gestures and aggressive, threatening or otherwise unsafe driving. Because of this, road rage can often cause not only verbal and physical altercations between motorists, but also accidents on the road. These accidents often result in the motorists involved, as well as innocent bystanders being injured or killed on the roadways.

The History of Road Rage

The term â€œroad rageâ€• originated due to a Los Angeles news broadcast discussing a series of freeway shootings in the area that occurred from 1987 to 1988. The shootings were attributed to road rage, which was otherwise aggressive gestures and maneuvers that were being acted out by drivers. Traffic congestion or traffic jams are believed to be the main contributor to road rage. That said, it is typically seen in areas with dense traffic that frequently experience slow moving traffic on freeways, bumper to bumper traffic or completely gridlocked traffic.

The Manifestation of Road Rage

Road rage is believed to have common manifestations that include aggressive driving. Aggressive driving is defined as accelerating or braking suddenly, tailgating, preventing other motorists from merging, cutting off drivers, flashing lights or continuously honking the vehicleâ€™s horn, driving at excessive speeds or in the median and hitting other vehicles or intentionally causing a vehicle collision.

Road rage also manifests as almost psychotic behavior, such as chasing motorists, yelling and other disruptive behavior, rude gestures, verbal abuse, verbal threats, physical assault, getting out of the vehicle to initiate a confrontation, threatening the use of a firearm or throwing objects from the vehicle as it is moving with intent to damage another vehicle.

Implications of Road Rage

In the United States alone, there are in excess of 300 road rage cases each year that result in fatality or serious injury to 1200 individuals on average.

Some jurisdictions differentiate aggressive driving and road rage, placing them into two separate categories. However, only a few states in the U.S. have actually differentiated aggressive driving from road rage. In these states, road rage is prosecuted as a typical assault and battery case, either with a vehicle or without one. In the instance of road rage causing a death, it is charged as vehicular homicide.

The penalties associated with road rage vary by state and even by specific jurisdiction and often depend on the seriousness of the offense. In fact, many jurisdictions feel that it is easier to prosecute road rage as careless or reckless driving.

Is Road Rage Considered a Medical Condition?

Believe it or not, road rage is officially considered a mental disorder and is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. After a survey performed on 9200 U.S. adults, the manifestations that are associated with the disorder are believed to correlate with intermittent

explosive disorder. The causes of this latter disorder, however, have not yet been detailed as of the time of this writing.

The most road rage in the U.S. is believed to occur in New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Minneapolis/St. Paul and Dallas/Ft. Worth.

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