

Excerpt from *Think Fast and Prevent a Violent Crime: Respond to Danger in 20 Seconds (or Less!)*
by Susan Bartelstone

- ✓ Stay calm
- ✓ Try to avoid problems
- ✓ Plan ahead in case of trouble!

Road Rage study conducted by [The Zebra](#) (October, 2019):

- 82% of drivers in the U.S. admit to having road rage or driving aggressively at least once in the past year.
- 59% of drivers reported showing anger by honking.
- 45% of drivers report changing lanes without signaling.
- 42% of drivers claimed they've yelled or cursed loudly at another driver.
- 38% said they've used rude or obscene gestures at drivers.
- 7% got out of their vehicle to verbally confront another driver.
- 6% threw objects.
- 6% got in a physical altercation with another driver.
- 5% sideswiped another vehicle.
- 5% bumped or rammed another vehicle on purpose.
- 5% forced another driver off the road.

“Bird” Begets Road Rage!

by Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist

Losing Your Cool Can Be Dangerous.

Received the following email: I'm a businesswoman in my late 50s. I had just finished grocery shopping at a large mall near my home, at the end of a particularly exhausting day, and was leaving to go home. A car pulled out in front of me (deliberately, I felt), holding me up. I angrily pulled around the car and sped on.

The other driver became furious and began to follow me way too close, trying to cut me off. Even though he looked large and scary, I completely lost my temper and flipped him the “bird” (3rd finger salute).

This enraged him even more and he set out after me, pursuing me for over 20 minutes down a crowded highway. I was weaving in between cars trying to lose him, but he kept right on my tail. At one point, he tossed a glass juice bottle at me and tried to smash my windshield. He missed my car but shattered glass littered the road—and put all the cars behind me at risk of a blowout. I was so flustered and nervous I didn't even think to dial the Police on my cell phone.

Finally, I managed to get behind him, forcing him to make a turn at an intersection. I went the other way and was able to lose him. I never reported the incident to the Police though (in shock, I guess), and I worry that perhaps he copied down my license and can trace me to my home. What should I do about this?

JW, Cambridge, MA



My answer: Dear JW: To start with, “birds” belong in the sky, not on the roads. Any of the above “fingers” would've been better!

All kidding aside, road rage is a very serious issue. For some unexplainable reason, normally mild-mannered people (statistically, it's usually men) can get super emotional when driving a car and do things they wouldn't normally do.



✓ **Get a canister of Pepper Spray**

The word "he" when describing a "rager" is used solely for expediency. They can be women as well as men, and teens as well as adults.

No absolutes exist in crime scenarios and no advice can address every variable. Evaluate each situation individually and only respond in the way you judge will ensure your safety or survival. Sometimes nothing can be done to prevent an undesirable outcome.

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The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](http://www.nhtsa.gov) defines road rage as the act of causing harm to a person or vehicle while on the road. And, road rage is categorized as a criminal offense, not a traffic violation. [CreditDonkey](http://www.creditdonkey.com)'s 2017 statistics show that a shocking 8 million drivers have acted upon their road rage, causing serious damage. And, every other day, doesn't it seem you hear about someone being shot or killed over a minor traffic dispute.

So, don't let a bad day cause you to lose your temper; the consequences simply aren't worth it. Staying calm and letting the driver take his time (even if you felt it was "deliberate") would've prevented the terrifying situation that happened to you. It might be a good idea to learn some anger management or calming techniques for the next time you run into a stupid driver (AND you will!).

Tips and Tricks

In a road rage situation, it's risky to keep driving. You don't want your pursuer to crash into you, force you off the road or pull out a gun and shoot at you. To attract attention to your plight, honk your horn and flash your lights continuously, and get off the highway at the closest exit. Try to drive to a gas station, restaurant, shopping center, police or fire station or any place where you can get help. Park right in front of the store or building and run inside as quickly as you can, making all the noise you can

If you're in an unfamiliar location, look for highway signs that indicate a rest stop or get off the highway and take your chance at finding something. This is a judgment call, of course; lonely side roads are dangerous in road rage situations too. If you're trapped in your car, pepper spray might just save the day.

No matter how flustered you were, it would've been best to call the Police on your cellphone as soon as you realized you were in danger. I suggest you report the incident to the Police anyway. In case this man does appear at your home, you want a complaint on file. Keep a lookout for his car for a few weeks and go to www.crimeprevention101.com for safety tips on how to secure your home.

If you often travel by car, carry a car cellphone charger, a canister of pepper spray and look into getting one of those all-purpose systems that is a combination of in-vehicle security, communications AND diagnostics systems. It can call the Police or an ambulance in an emergency; call for highway service if your car breaks down; provide directions, find shopping centers, suggest hotels or restaurants (and make the reservations). Some even open your car remotely if you've locked your keys inside. Nice!