

## Use Your Turnsignals: 'Flicker-Switchers,' Unite!

Observation of drivers on major roadways has led to the conclusion that most of them can be classified as either "flicker-switchers" or "switcher-flickers." It's a significant difference. The flicker-switchers flick their turn signals before switching lanes. This communicates their intention in advance, so you can bet they also take a visual check before making the move. By thinking, looking, and signaling in advance of the lane change, they are protecting themselves and fellow users of the road. Hurrah for the flicker-switchers; would there were more like them.

In contrast, the switcher-flickers begin to switch lanes first, and only then start their turn signals blinking. They are seemingly acting out of blind habit, with no conscious thought about the importance of advance warning. Chances are they switch and click with never a glance at their rear-view mirrors—or over their left shoulders to check out the traditional blind spot.

Often, the switcher-flicker's left wheels have already crossed the dividing line before the turn signal appears. No wonder the too-late flick is some- times followed by a startled "Oops!" punctuated by the costly crunch of metal.

The flicker-switcher's winking signal is a true warning because it speaks in the future tense: "I'm going to turn; be alert." But the switcher-flicker's signal speaks in the present tense ("I'm turning"), or even the past ("I've turned"). To have any cautionary value, the message must be sent in advance of the action it is supposed to alert others to.

There are other kinds of signalers, creating crises in our traffic lanes as well. Probably the most dangerous is the "switcher-nonflicker," who veers across the line with no warning whatsoever. But the "flicker-nonswitcher," whose signal light blinks busily on and on with no resulting lane change, puts people on the alert and doesn't follow through. Sort of like the boy who cried "wolf," this can make other drivers ignore subsequent signals.

How about you? Does your turn signaling communicate consistently and correctly, in the future tense, helping to prevent or minimize the possibility of collisions and sideswipes? It takes only a little determination to be a reliable flicker-switcher, but it can pay big safety dividends.