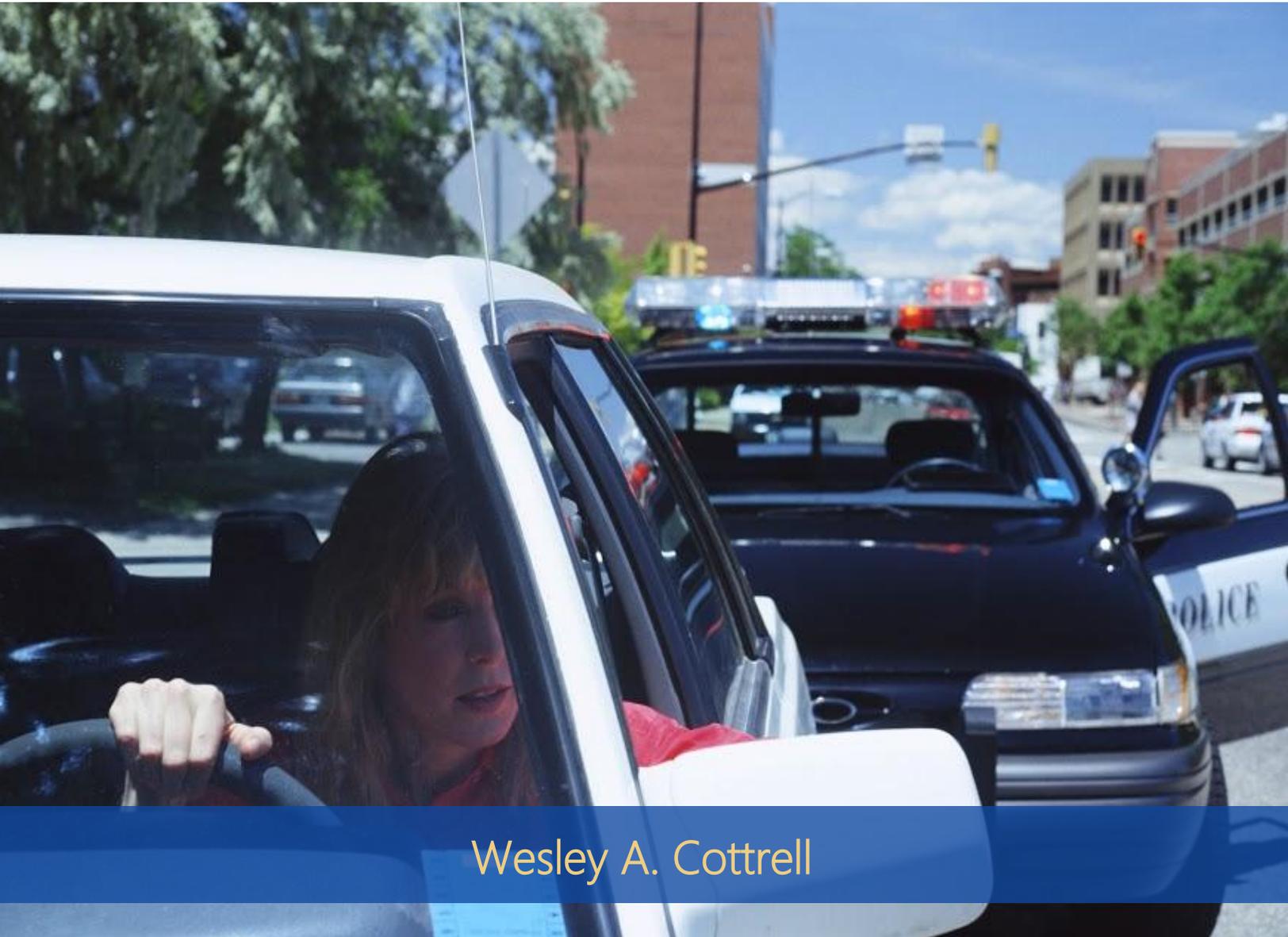


# THE DANGERS OF MISSOURI AGGRESSIVE DRIVING

*“Aggressive driving is a much broader concept that many realize. If we can begin to understand the real dangers of aggressive driving, we can hopefully improve the overall impact it has on traffic safety.”*



Wesley A. Cottrell



One major concern in highway and traffic safety is the increase in reports of aggressive driving. However, the concept of "aggressive driving" is not really understood, or well-defined, for that matter. Most people see aggressive driving as being synonymous with "road rage."

However, these two concepts are not actually identical. Aggressive driving is a much broader concept that many realize. If we can begin to understand the real dangers of aggressive driving, we can hopefully improve the overall impact it has on traffic safety.

## Defining Aggressive Driving

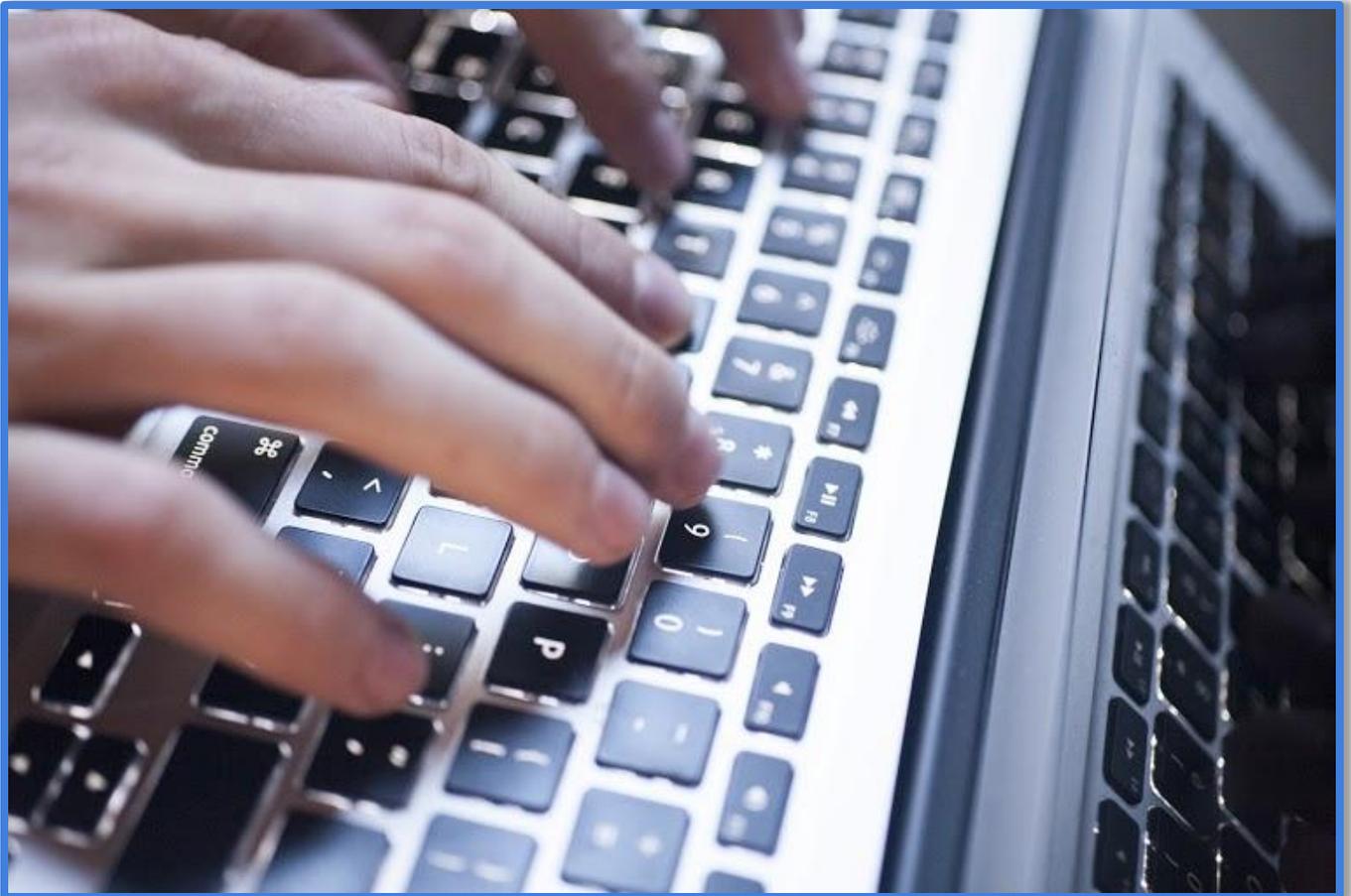
The legal concept of "aggressive driving" describes a variety of traffic offenses



that display a certain type of aggressiveness, usually meant to save time. These offenses include following too closely, speeding, unsafe lane changes, failing to signal intent to change lanes, and other forms of negligent or inconsiderate driving. This driving behavior is most often seen when there is traffic congestion. A driver may already be running behind and they are determined to get where they need to be as fast as possible, regardless of the rules of the road.

Aggressive driving puts that driver, as well as the others on the road, at a higher risk of accident and injury.

## Why Aggressive Driving Often Goes Unreported



The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, founded in 1947 by AAA to conduct research regarding highway safety issues, [defines](#) aggressive driving as "any unsafe driving behavior, performed deliberately and with ill intention or disregard for safety, can constitute aggressive driving." The trouble is, information regarding the intentions or motivations of drivers is not typically included in the data on motor vehicle collisions. Therefore, attempts to estimate the frequency of aggressive driving are largely unsuccessful.

## Recognizing Road Rage

Road rage, as dubbed by the media, generally occurs when a traffic incident escalates into irrational hostility or violence. Certainly, road rage and aggressive driving are closely related. In fact, road rage is most likely triggered by an aggressive driving situation, such as cutting someone off. However, road rage goes well beyond a traffic violation, usually resulting in a verbal or physical confrontation. In more extreme cases, road rage can end in assault, sometimes with a weapon.



## Why Road Rage is So Dangerous

What makes road rage so dangerous is the fact that victims rarely see it coming. In some cases, road rage is triggered by another driver's intentional conduct, such as switching from lane to lane in an effort to go around other vehicles and cutting someone off. But in most cases, the traffic offense is committed unintentionally. For example, you might make an abrupt exit from the highway without proper signaling, because you suddenly realized you were about to miss your exit.



## Aggressive Driving Statistics

The most recent statistics compiled on aggressive driving show that speeding is



the most common potentially-aggressive action by far. In fact, nearly one of every three fatal crashes over the period studied involved a driver who was reported to have been speeding or driving too fast for the road or weather conditions. Half of the fatal crashes involving aggressive actions were single-vehicle crashes. Of the 119,475 fatalities reported as a result of potentially-aggressive driving, 56.3% were the aggressive drivers themselves 21.6% were their passengers, and 22.1% were occupants of

other vehicles and non-motorists.

## What Can be Done?

Aggressive driving and road rage are both very serious public concerns. Some



reports have indicated that drivers are actually more afraid of an aggressive driver than an impaired driver. The media should refrain from sensationalizing aggressive driving and retaliatory behavior of drivers involved in so-called road rage incidents. We all need a clearer understanding of the difference between aggressive driving and road rage, an issue that law enforcement can be very helpful in clarifying. As the public becomes better educated, and begins to understand the differences between aggressive driving and more extreme road rage,

more reports of aggressive driving will be made. The point is, choosing to report aggressive drivers to law enforcement, instead of overreacting and allowing anger to stand in the way of common sense and judgment, can go a long way to reducing the frequency of these incidents.

If you have questions regarding aggressive driving, or any other personal injury concerns, call the Cottrell Law Office at (800) 364-8305.

## About the Author



### **Wesley A. Cottrell**

Wesley A. Cottrell has been successfully practicing law for over 29 years. Born in Springdale, Arkansas and raised in Baxter Springs, Kansas, Wes is licensed to practice law in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Wes earned his B.A. from Pittsburg State University in 1981 and his J.D. from the Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kansas in 1985. He was admitted to practice law in Kansas in 1986, in Missouri in 1987, in Arkansas in 1989, and Oklahoma in 1993.

He is licensed to practice law in the United States District Court for the District of Kansas, eastern Arkansas, western Arkansas, and western Missouri. He was Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in Crawford County, Kansas from 1987-1989.

Wes lives in Rogers, Arkansas with his wife, Shelly, and their two daughters, Kennedy and Gabby. He is active in his community, and is regularly asked to teach courses to other attorney on personal injury and workers' compensation litigation.

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The Missouri Bar  
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