

'We're teaching lifelong skills'

Shreveport/Bossier City driving school goes beyond rules of the road

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Welcome to Risk Management 101.

That's what Bud Chauncy, owner and instructor of First Class Driving School in Shreveport/Bossier, calls his driver-training course.



Jessica Leigh

Standing among road signs and mock maps of busy streets, Bud Chauncy, owner and instructor at First Class Driving School, teaches students the safe way to drive and how to prevent a collision, not just react to one.

The certified road test examiner teaches a more intensive drivers training, helping young driver learn not only road rules, but also survival skills, such as how to crash properly.

"We're teaching lifelong skills. People could die if they don't have them. "

But what makes Chauncy's school unique in Shreveport and Bossier City is the ability to road test its students. The school received permission in mid-July from the state Office of Public Safety to administer the test, eliminating most of the wait at the state Department of Motor Vehicles.

However, there is one thing that the school can't do: issue a license.

Instead, the school gives a sealed envelope with all the paperwork - successful road test, certificate of driver training, etc. - to the student, who takes it to DMV to get a license.

"I wish we could (issue the license)," Chauncy said. "Hopefully, we can expedite the process. "

But why pay for a road test when the DMV test is free?

Familiarity with the school's staff will make students more comfortable and less likely to make nervous mistakes during the test, Chauncy says.

The school's vehicles, outfitted with a passenger emergency brake, are available for the test. And students will be familiar with that car. Collisions also are less likely with the Instructor's ability to stop the vehicle, he said.

Road tests are available by appointment all week, after business hours and even during inclement weather; Chauncy said The DMV will road test only from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays but not from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and never during rain.

Students are allowed to use their own vehicle but must have valid inspection sticker, license plate and vehicle registration. The school's DMV Certified Examiner will inspect the vehicle before a road test is given.

The school also offers defensive driving classes for insurance discounts and traffic Violation deferrals.

A standard 10 percent discount on policies is available for completing the 36-hour course, said Mavis Reagan, an office manager for State Farm Insurance Co.

Students said they were rather impressed with the professional teaching and personal attention they received.

"It's really educational," said Shelley Gurwara, 14, of Bossier City.

"I'm learning a lot of stuff I didn't know," said Chad Louis, 15, of Shreveport

Learning is one of the keys Chauncy's lessons emphasize. Knowledge of what to do in certain situations - tire blowouts, collisions, etc. - is essential to any good driver, he said.

"There is no room for ignorance in driving an automobile. We're not just driving out there, we're learning to prevent crashes."

Chauncy even teaches how to buy a car. Not how to finance or get a better deal; but how to choose a safe car and what to look for to reduce high insurance premiums.

Online

First Class Driving School will administer the Department of Motor Vehicles road test for a fee of \$30 if you use your car, \$45 if you use their car.

Log on to www.FirstClassDrivingSchool.com to learn more about First Class Driving School, including course offerings, information for parents and how to pick a driving school and safe vehicle for yourself or a new driver.