

Sharing The Road With Large Trucks

A tractor-trailer loaded with freight, safe-rated tires, and properly adjusted brakes, traveling at 55 miles per hour on a clear, dry roadway requires a minimum of 290 feet to come to a complete stop. Mindful of this, it is important to be attentive and drive defensively when sharing the road with large trucks. In 8 out of 10 fatal crashes between cars and trucks, the occupants of the passenger vehicles are killed.

Many of these crashes could be avoided if motorists knew about truck limitations and how to steer clear of unsafe situations involving trucks. For example; because it takes trucks much longer to stop, enter roadways carefully, never cutting right in front of them - always leave several car lengths between your vehicle and the truck.

Avoid changing lanes directly in front of trucks then slowing down immediately after passing them. Large trucks need lots of room and time to stop.

Don't hang out in the NO-Zone! No Zones are areas around trucks where cars (1) "disappear" into blindspots, or (2) are so close that they restrict the truck driver's ability to stop or maneuver safely. Both types of No-Zones greatly increase the potential for a crash.

Points to Remember -- Know the No-Zone!

Backing Up

When a truck is backing up, it sometimes must temporarily block the street to maneuver its trailer accurately. Never pass close behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is in the process of backing up. Remember, most trailers are 8 1/2 feet wide and can completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and a loading area. So if you try to pass behind the truck, you enter a (NO-ZONE) blindspot for you and the truck driver.

Passing

Another NO-ZONE is just in front of trucks. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to cut in too soon and slow down after passing a big truck. Because of their size and weight, trucks need a much greater distance to stop than cars. If you don't give them enough space, you run the risk of being hit from behind. So be sure to maintain a consistent speed when passing and don't pull in front of the truck unless you can see the entire front of the truck in your rear-view mirror.

Rear Blindspots

Unlike automobiles, trucks have deep blindspots directly behind them. If you tailgate, not only do you make it impossible for the truck driver to see you, but you also cut off your own view of traffic flow. So staying in this NO-ZONE is almost like inviting a collision.

Side Blindspots

Trucks have much larger blindspots on both sides than cars do. When you travel in these blindspots for any length of time, you can't be seen by the truck driver. If the truck driver needs to make an emergency maneuver or change lanes, they won't be able to see you and a crash could result.

Wide Turns

Because of their vehicles' size, truck drivers sometimes need to swing wide to manage their turns. When they do, they can't see cars directly behind or beside them. So give them plenty of room and Never try to squeeze around them.

