



Sharing the Road with Trucks

Truckers Share Your Concern with Road Safety

Safety is a critical concern of Canada's professional truck drivers and the trucking industry. Truckers share their workplace with thousands of motorists, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. They understand that road safety is every driver's business. To help all drivers share the road safely, they are happy to share their *tips for safer driving* with you.

Know Your Trucks

Trucks aren't like cars - not even big cars. They behave differently when accelerating, braking, climbing a hill, switching lanes or turning. The more you understand how trucks behave, the better prepared you will be to anticipate problems and avoid them.

For example, anyone who's been behind a tractor-trailer at a stop light knows they take a long time to accelerate - after all they're pulling up to 80,000 pounds. The truck may have to go through ten gears, which takes time, before it reaches the speed limit. In the same way, trucks entering a highway can take some time to get up to speed.

Just as they are slow to get started, trucks cannot speed up, slow down or maneuver as quickly as cars. Motorists should avoid doing anything that may force the truck driver to take sudden evasive action, which trucks can't do safely. For example, don't cut in front of a truck or brake sharply when in front of a truck.

Trucks make waves

Trucks are big and they create a lot of air turbulence around them. That can affect your vehicle when you're passing them, when they're passing you, or when you pass one another on a two-lane highway. Be prepared for a little "rock and roll" from air turbulence and keep a firm grip on your steering wheel.

Making a big splash

Those big wheels can throw up a lot of water when it rains and slush and salt spray in winter. Turn your windshield wipers on before overtaking and passing a truck. You need to see clearly at all times and passing a truck is not the time to be adjusting your wipers. If the spray seems more than your wipers can handle, don't pass.



Avoid blind spots: front, sides and rear

Remember that truck drivers can't see you when you're in their blind spots or "no zones" - that's on both sides, directly behind and in front. When you're passing alongside a truck, or driving too close behind, you may find yourself in a blind spot.



Typically, truck drivers can't see anything closer than 30 feet and sometimes up to 200 feet behind the trailer. Stay 250 feet back or follow the four-second rule: if you pass the same fixed point as a truck before reaching the count of four, you're too close. And don't ride directly in front of a truck. A trucker with a long hood may not be able to see the first 20 feet of roadway in front of the truck's bumper. Even trucks with sloped hoods or no front hood can have a front blind spot of up to ten feet.

Remember, if you can't see the driver in the truck's mirrors, the driver probably can't see you. Stay in sight by keeping your distance and to the left of your lane.

Pass with care

Remember those blind spots and pass from where the driver can see you, not from directly behind the truck. This is particularly important at night and in bad weather. Never pass on the right - the blind spot is even larger on that side.

Make sure it's safe to pass. If you're not sure, don't pass. Remember, the longer the truck is, the more distance you need to pass. Depending on trailer length - from 40 to 53 feet - the entire truck may be more than the 70 feet long. You may not be able to tell how long the truck is from behind. Don't pass unless you're absolutely sure there is enough room. When you're sure it's safe, signal, move into the passing lane, and pass promptly (but safely). Stay as far to the left as is safe. This helps reduce the effect of air turbulence on your vehicle, and gives you a margin of safety if the truck moves outside of its lane while you pass.

Don't linger in the passing lane beside the truck. When you can see the whole front of the truck in your rear-view mirror, move back into the right-hand lane and don't slow down. That way, you know you're a safe distance from the truck.

Bad weather is a bad time to pass large trucks. The combination of splash and spray, air turbulence, slick road surfaces and poor visibility increases the chance of an accident.

Don't cut in front

Don't cut in front of trucks, they need a lot more time and space to stop than cars. Loaded trucks can weigh 80,000 lbs. and take the length of a football field to stop. Stay 4 to 5 car lengths behind trucks. When entering traffic on an expressway or when passing, don't cut in front of trucks and force them to attempt a sudden stop - they could jackknife.



Give trucks room to move

Turning trucks need a lot of space, so watch their turn signals and always give them the room they need. Remember that trucks make wide turns. And, they may move out in the direction opposite their turn (left for a right-hand turn) to avoid running onto the curb. Don't move up into that space while they're turning or you could be caught in a squeeze when the truck completes its turn.

Check your weight

Trucks sometimes have to slow down and stop to be weighed. When you see highway signs for weigh stations, be prepared for trucks around you to slow down and exit the highway to enter the station. Also, watch for trucks entering the highway from weigh stations.

Don't stand so close

Don't park directly behind a truck, especially on a hill. A truck starting up may roll backward as the driver releases the brake to engage the clutch and accelerate. And, if you're parked too close, the driver won't know your car is there. Don't park right behind a truck. Try to park slightly to the left of your lane so the driver knows your car is there.

Help trucks get by

When a truck passes you, stay right and slow down slightly. Keep your eyes on the road and on your mirrors. This will allow the truck to pass safely. If a truck is signaling to change lanes, give it room. The driver may be trying to avoid another vehicle. When traveling in the right lane, move left to allow trucks to enter the highway.

Take your cue from trucks

Take your cue from trucks. Truck drivers, in their elevated cabs, can see farther ahead than you can. If you see a truck starting to slow down, anticipate trouble and start slowing down too.

Don't cross behind a backing truck

Whether driving or walking, never cross behind a truck that is backing up. Truck drivers have no rear-view mirror and may not see you behind them. Many motorists and pedestrians are killed or injured each year by ignoring trucks that are backing up.

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