



The Justice Institute of BC and Teamsters Local 31 demonstrate safe driving behaviours at the Be Truck Aware launch.

Are you truck aware?

By Ryan Parton

One in five traffic fatalities in B.C. occurs in a crash involving a large commercial vehicle. A newly formed alliance aims to reduce these kinds of collisions through an inaugural education and enforcement initiative — Be Truck Aware.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of work-related injuries and fatalities among transport truck drivers; 1,755 drivers were injured and missed time from work as the result of a motor vehicle incident between 2012 and 2016 alone. Unfortunately, the figures are much worse for those they share the road with.

Though large trucks are involved in less than 1 percent of all crashes in B.C., they're involved in more than 20 percent of fatal crashes. Studies show that those in the passenger vehicle are at least four times more likely to be killed than the driver of the truck, and that two-thirds or more of those crashes are the fault of the passenger vehicle driver.

It's these grim statistics that prompted the formation of the Be Truck Aware Alliance, a group committed to reducing car-truck crashes by educating all drivers on how to share the road safely. Spearheaded by

RoadSafetyBC, the Be Truck Aware Alliance was inspired by a campaign in Washington state that was replicated in other states and eventually encouraged by the U.S. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

This June, the alliance conducted a survey of B.C. drivers and learned that more than 40 percent admitted to not always driving safely around large trucks — a finding that came as no surprise to commercial drivers.

“When we first learn to drive, we’re taught to be co-operative,” says Bruce Meadley, who’s been driving commercial trucks for 20 years. “But over time, driving behaviours erode and we end up in a competitive environment where everyone’s trying to beat my truck or beat the light. They don’t realize how much danger they’re putting themselves in.”

How to be truck aware

Drivers should always think and act responsibly when driving around large commercial vehicles, and take the following precautions:

- **Leave space:** A fully loaded transport truck travelling at 105 km/h takes 66 percent longer to brake than a passenger car at the same speed. It also needs extra room to turn — don’t take that space away.

- **Don't merge too soon:** When passing a truck, make sure you can see both its headlights in your rear-view mirror before merging.
- **Be visible:** Slow down or move well ahead of large trucks to stay out of the truck driver's blind spots.
- **Anticipate wide turns:** Watch for trucks making wide swings to turn right. Never drive ahead in the right lane beside a turning truck.

Keeping truck drivers safe

"Every commercial truck driver is a worker who deserves to arrive home safely," says Chris Back, WorkSafeBC director of Industry and Labour Services. "Most trucking companies and their professional drivers are safe and take pride in what they do, but the trucking safety record can always be better."

Employers are legally responsible for developing safety programs, policies, and procedures as well as job-specific training, equipment, resources, and supervision for people who drive a vehicle for work purposes. This includes members of the "grey fleet," who use their own vehicles for work purposes.

Truck drivers and employers need to ensure brakes and tires are in top condition, use caution in poor weather conditions, eliminate in-cab distractions, be well-rested, and ensure loads are well-balanced and secure.

A shared responsibility

"Collisions involving large trucks are one of the top three causes of injury claims and claims costs in the trucking industry," says executive director of Safety Driven and the Trucking Safety Council of BC. "It is important we remember that safe driving by all drivers is a shared responsibility on our roads."

Trina Pollard, WorkSafeBC's manager of Industry and Labour Services for transportation and occupational road safety agrees. "The messages we're trying to promote through the Be Truck Aware Alliance are for both drivers of cars and the trucking industry itself, including employers, owners/operators, supervisors, and drivers. If we all do our part to improve road safety, we'll reduce and ultimately eliminate injuries and fatalities related to these motor vehicle crashes."

The Be Truck Aware Alliance includes the B.C. Trucking Association, Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement, ICBC, the Justice Institute of British Columbia, the RCMP, RoadSafetyBC, the Trucking Safety Council of British Columbia, Teamsters Local 31, and WorkSafeBC.

Additional Be Truck Aware resources and statistics can be found at gov.bc.ca/betruckaware. ☺

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