

Driver Safety Letter

presented by



Common Sense Tips to Lower Accidents

March 2020

In 2018, 4,136 people lost their lives in crashes involving commercial motor vehicles. This is the latest year for which figures are available. Of these deaths, 16% were truck occupants, 67% were occupants of passenger vehicles, and 15% were pedestrians, bicyclists or motorcyclists. The number of people who died in large truck crashes was 31% higher in 2018 than in 2009, when it was the lowest it has been since the collection of fatal crash data began in 1975.

While it's true the total number of truck miles continued to increase in 2018, the reality is that too many people die in these accidents. As a result, it is incumbent that those of us in the industry take steps to be constantly vigilant to detect unexpected road conditions, distracted drivers, and motorists who don't understand how commercial vehicles operate. Following are some ideas, brought to you by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, to avoid becoming a statistic. Not surprisingly, some of these best practices start before you get into the cab.

- Get enough rest; don't drive when you're fatigued, too ill to focus, or on medications (including over-the-counter medicine) that make you drowsy or dizzy.
- Stay up to date on weather and road conditions and detours in order to plan driving time.
- Make sure that pre-trip safety inspections are completed particularly for tires and brakes. Make sure your load is well balanced and secure, as a shifting load can cause a rollover or loss of control.
- Use your safety belt every time. Safety belts save lives, reduce injuries, and allow drivers to stay inside and in control of their vehicles in case of a crash. One-third of truck drivers involved in fatal crashes were partially or totally ejected from their vehicles.
- Once you climb behind the wheel, scan ahead about 15 seconds (a quarter mile on interstates, or one to two blocks in cities) for traffic issues, work zones, and other dangers.
- Check mirrors every 8-10 seconds to be aware of vehicles entering your blind spots.
- Signal and brake to give other drivers plenty of time to notice your intent.
- If you must pull off the road, use flashers, reflective triangles, and road flares to alert other drivers.
- Driving too fast for weather or road conditions creates risks as well as crashes.
- Be aware that non-commercial navigation systems and apps may not provide warning of height and weight limitations and other commercial vehicle restrictions.
- Work zones present many hazards, like lane shifts, sudden stops, uneven road surfaces, moving workers and equipment, and confused passenger vehicle drivers. Slow down, maintain extra following space, obey all work zone signs and signals, and to be prepared to stop.
- Texting is among the worst driving distractions. The odds of being involved in a crash, near-crash, or unintentional lane deviation are 23.2 times greater for drivers who are texting while driving.
- Research shows that drivers texting while driving took their eyes off the forward road for 4.6 seconds on average. At 55 mph, this equates to traveling 371 feet (more than the length of a football field) without looking at the road.
- Eating, drinking, interacting with a navigational device, map reading, controlling a pet, or any other activity that takes focus off the road can also be a deadly distraction.
- If you must attend to an activity other than driving, get off at the next exit or pullover – it's not worth the risk.

The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and [CPC Logistics, Inc.](#), is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at tmoores@nptc.org or (703)838-8898.