

Driver Safety Letter

presented by



Safe Driving in the COVID-19 World

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As various states and localities begin to “open up” their economies after the prolonged COVID-19 shutdown, be aware that changing social, customer and regulatory environments will continue to evolve to reflect the new norm. As professional drivers, we need to make sure that we focus on defensive driving strategies and tactics that will keep us safe and healthy. Defensive driving is a way of operating your vehicle to avoid accidents due to the actions of others. To drive defensively you should: keep your distance, maintain a safe speed and stay alert. Recognizing potentially dangerous situations well in advance can allow you to safely maneuver past these situations. Anticipate and prepare for the worst from other motorists and continue to be vigilant in your efforts to protect your own health and safety and those of others around you.

Keep in mind that defensive driving begins before you even get behind the wheel by getting enough sleep and arriving for your shift well-rested, alert and focused. Pack healthy snacks and lunches. Bring plenty of hand-sanitizer and/or wipes and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly. Continue to practice social distancing.

Because professional truck drivers like yourself may be traveling to new locations during the pandemic, you may be unfamiliar with the roadway and feel compelled to read a map or directions while driving. The Large Truck Crash Causation Study (LTCCS) reported that 22% of large-truck crashes occurred when truck drivers were unfamiliar with the roadway. Accordingly, plan your routes in advance so you know the local loading and unloading requirements and recognize that these may be changing frequently and that you may face unexpected delays. Also continuously monitor weather conditions.

If you miss a turn or an exit, pass the turn and find a safe way to change direction. Do not take shortcuts. Trying to suddenly correct a missed turn or exit may result in you performing an illegal or unsafe maneuver which may threaten your safety and the safety of the vehicles around you.

Use turn signals first to indicate your intent to change lanes, next visually scan for adjacent traffic and road hazards, and then execute a safe lane change. By signaling your intentions well in advance, you will be in a safer position to communicate with the surrounding drivers and you will be able to safely execute the desired driving maneuver.

Even as more and more people begin to travel, drive within the speed limits and road and weather conditions. Driving too fast for conditions is defined as traveling at a speed that is greater than a reasonable standard for safe driving. Examples of conditions where drivers may find themselves driving too fast include: wet roadways, reduced visibility (fog), uneven roads, construction zones, curves, intersections, gravel roads, and heavy traffic. Studies have reported that 23% of large-truck crashes occurred when commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers were traveling too fast for conditions.

Remember that speed limits posted on curve warning signs are intended for passenger vehicles, not large trucks. You should reduce their speed even further. Studies have shown that large trucks entering a curve, even at the posted speed limit, have lost control and rolled over due to their high center of gravity. Similarly, approach exit/entrance ramps at a safe speed. Truck rollovers are more likely to occur on exit/entrance ramps when the driver misjudges the sharpness of the ramp curve.

Thanks again for all you do!

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.