

Safety Tips for Sharing the Road with Trucks

Due to their design, trucks have characteristics that make them far different from smaller vehicles. You cannot afford to make driving errors that put you and those you care about at risk. Here is some sound advice that can make the highways that we share with trucks a lot safer.

Braking Differences

Understand that a truck needs a much longer braking distance than a car.

This is a critically important point. Don't cut into a truck's space cushion (i.e. the space in front of a truck that allows for a safe following distance). Think of this area as the truck's safety zone. If you cut into this area, it reduces a truck's much needed braking distance and restricts what evasive action can be taken.

Passing and Being Passed

When passing a truck, wait until you see the entire front of the truck in your rear view mirror before moving back into the lane.

Always check your own vehicle's blind spot before pulling back in. Once you re-enter the lane maintain your speed.

When passing a truck, do not stay alongside for too long a time.

Pass as quickly and safely as possible and don't cut too closely in front of a truck when re-entering the lane.

When meeting, following or passing a truck on a highway, be aware that wind pressure created at high speeds by large vehicles can affect the handling of your vehicle.

Within your lane, stay as far away as possible from the truck to minimize the effect of the increased wind pressure. If a truck passes you or you pass a truck, keep both hands on the steering wheel to maintain control of your vehicle.

In rainy/snowy conditions ensure you have your headlights and wipers on.

Your visibility can be adversely impacted by the water and slush a large vehicle can throw. If you cannot see clearly to pass a truck because of this, don't do it. Wait until it is safe to do so. When attempting a safe pass, keep both hands firmly on the wheel.

If a truck is passing you, move to the right within your lane and drop back or slow down slightly to allow the truck to pass safely.

Keep your eyes on the road ahead and scan your mirrors when necessary while the truck is passing. Make it easy for a truck to pass by following this procedure. It will keep you both safe.

Never drive behind a truck when it is reversing.

You may be in the driver's blind spot and you are at risk of being hit

Don't block a trucks passing lane

On multi-lane freeways, trucks longer than 6.5 metres cannot use the far-left lane. Instead they must use the lane immediately to the right (middle lane) to pass slower vehicles. On a three lane highway the center lane is a trucks passing lane.

Safe Following Tips

Don't tailgate a truck.

If a truck brakes suddenly and you are following too close, you can quickly become involved in a serious rear end collision. The farther you are away from the truck, the less chance there is for a collision

Use a trucks mirrors as a guide to determine how far behind you need to be.

A trucks mirrors are about nine feet apart. When following a truck you should be able to see both mirrors. If you can't see the mirrors then the truck driver cannot see you.

Blind Spots.

Remember a truck has large blind spots. Stay Visible.

When we say blind spots we are referring to the area surrounding a truck where the drivers view is restricted. They primarily exist on the left and right sides and directly behind a truck. Cars and smaller vehicles can disappear from sight when they enter a trucks blind spot. Remember mirrors don't show everything. Traveling for any length of time in a trucks blind spot is dangerous.

On Hills and Inclines

When stopping behind a truck on a hill or incline give the truck plenty of room.

The truck may roll backwards slightly because the driver needs to take his/her foot off the brake and onto the accelerator and apply the clutch with the other foot. If you position your vehicle slightly to the left in the lane the truck driver can ascertain through mirrors that another vehicle is behind. This type of collision is preventable if we heed this advice.

Advice on Right Hand Turns

Turning right is more difficult for trucks.

Tractor trailers have to make wide right turns because of their configuration. Stay alert and don't ignore a trucks turning signal. If you try to beat a truck to a turn or pass it on the right you may get caught in its blind spot. This could involve you in a serious collision. Therefore, do not attempt to pass on the inside of a truck or any large commercial vehicle that is trying to make a right hand turn.

Heed Advanced Warnings

If a truck shows signs of slowing down you should slow down too.

Trucks can see further ahead than smaller vehicles. If a truck slows down it may be an indication of danger or trouble ahead.

Avoid Distractions

Keep alert and stay free of distractions.

Driving any vehicle requires your full-time attention. This is especially true when sharing the highway with large trucks. Avoid distractions to stay safe.

When Trucks Enter Highways

Allow plenty of room for trucks entering the highway.

Remember trucks can't accelerate as quickly as cars.

Final Words of Advice

Remember, when sharing the road with large trucks they:

- require a longer stopping distance
- have large blind spots
- need extra room to manoeuvre