

UNDERSTANDING TRUCK DRIVING What Every Motorist Needs to Know

Many motorists don't realize how much they put themselves in danger, with regard to big rig trucks. According to the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board), 80% of all accidents between cars and big rig trucks are caused by the drivers of cars. It is my feeling as well as other truck drivers, that if the motoring public were better educated on big rig trucks, many accidents can be prevented. Simply put, the car drivers do not realize how they are endangering themselves.

STOP BEHIND WHITE LINES For truck trailer turning clearance. As many of you have experienced, if you over-shoot the white line, you don't leave enough room for a truck's trailer to make the turn. So many motorists don't realize that it's **THEY** that are making the mistake, not the truck driver. The motorists' honk their horns, flip the middle finger, and yell at the truck driver. **PLEASE**, for your safety, you must **STOP BEHIND THE WHITE LINE**. That is why the white line is positioned where it is.

For truck trailer turning clearance. The truck driver has to swing wide to make the turn, and trailers always have a drag on them. If you see a trailer bearing down on you, and looking as though it will run you over, look at your position in the street! Are you over the white line? Well, no wonder it looks like you're going to get smashed. You have placed yourself in a dangerous position. You are in the way.

It's not the truck driver's fault that you over-shot the white line. People are always quick to blame the truck driver. When they don't even realize what they (the driver of the car) have done wrong. Spend a week in the driver seat of a big rig, and you'll change your car driving habits. Only then will you understand what so many 4-wheelers are doing wrong out there. And they (car drivers) don't even realize it. Truck drivers are in your city or town for a reason. They are earning a living picking up and delivering every kind of freight. If you got it, a trucker brought it. The car you drive, the food you eat, the bed you sleep in, your clothes, your home entertainment, gasoline, and everything.

All the things in your life that you use, need and want. They haul the freight, that stocks the shelves of the stores you enjoy shopping at. In shopping malls, please understand that semis are not there to go shopping. They are delivering washers, dryers, refrigerators, clothes, riding mowers, etc.. So when you see a semi, don't give them the finger, rather, give them the right of way.

They are working for you. There are customers waiting for these items. It's no picnic for a semi to have to maneuver a 53' trailer with approx 20' sleeper cab, 13'6" high, and 8' wide. It's S.T.U.N.T. driving for big rigs.

A professional driver can move around without hitting anyone or anything. If motorists only knew what today's professional truck drivers have to go through to get their cdl's, (commercial driver license). They would have a new respect for them. First, they go through one month, 5 days a week, 40hr a week truck driving school. Tuition averages \$3000.00 and up for the whole term.

Some drivers' have been able to qualify for a government program called J.T.P.A. (Job Training Partnership Act), of which I qualified for. Under this program, the government pays the tuition and the student not only has to complete the school, but stay employed for a pre-determined amount of time. In the field of their schooling.

This is a good example of our country giving opportunity to those less fortunate. So that they may improve their income and employment opportunities. Thus turning a low paying job, living paycheck to paycheck, into a future homeowner. Better pay = better opportunities. And by the time the student qualifies and takes the program, he/she has already paid well over \$3000.00 in income taxes as well as purchase taxes.

So, in essence, the student tax payer has actually paid their own tuition. It doesn't technically come from other Americans taxes. If you think about it. They are getting something good from the government, besides living in a free country. At end of school, students take the cdl test at their local dmv. On average 7-8 written tests, including air brakes, double and triple trailers, hazmat, tankers, and regular driving tests. A drug and medical exam.

Then after they pass all the written tests, they take a air brake test. They have to pass that. Then a full truck and trailer inspection inside and out test. Pass that. They do a difficult and very involved challenging backing test around cones, from all angles. Most people fail this test, several times. If you fail just one of these tests, you don't go any further. You have to start all the tests, all over again. The last test usually is the long, drive around town, driving test. Watch your trailer while turning. Watch your speed. Use your turn signals. Watch out for traffic, merging, lane changes, etc... With the examiner stone faced right next to you for all your tests. And there is no sweet talking these examiners. They are borderline mean. When a trailer is making a turn, the rear portion of it side tracks. That is why drivers' have to take up two lanes to make a turn. And swing wide.

When you are out in traffic and behind a big rig, watch the rear of the trailer as the driver makes the turn. You'll see exactly what I'm talking about. The driver is not blocking two lanes just to piss you off. They need that space to clear the corner, stop sign, traffic light, person standing waiting to cross street, etc.. If they turn too sharp, the back of the trailer side tracks and wipes out whatever is in it's way. So please, again, give the driver assistance, and give clearance. Stay back to allow the driver room to make the turn. Please be patient. The more car drivers in the way, the longer it's going to take the truck driver to clear them all and make the turn.

This is another area that 4-wheelers don't realize why the truck driver is doing what they are doing. Why they swing wide, etc.. Stay back and give him some room. They appreciate your help. You can even take a child's toy big rig and see what I mean. Set up a street situation and maneuver the toy around.

MERGING means either speed up or slow down depending on your speed and the speed of the vehicles already on the highway. It doesn't mean ride along the right side of a Semi and try to make the semi move over so you can get over.

Or it doesn't mean speed up like a race car driver and cut in front of the Semi because you don't want to be behind it. Just before your lane runs out. You'll clip the front bumper of the truck and go flying off the road, into the ditch or worse. For one thing, big rig trucks cannot slow down fast. We have a lot of weight and speed we are moving. It takes the length of a football field for a Semi to come to a complete stop at the average speed of 65 mph. The heavier the load is, the longer it takes to stop. Motorists that merge improperly, do not realize what is on the left of the truck driver.

Car drivers' cannot see what's in the left lane next to the truck. If the Semi doesn't move over, it's because someone is in that lane. And the semi isn't going to push them out of the way so that you can get over. That is where you, the merger, either needs to speed up or slow down and let the truck pass, to merge onto the highway safely. We get so many each day that run right along the right side of us, trying to outrun us to the end of the on ramp, and cut over in front of us.

The car drivers slam on their brakes when they realize they can't make it. And then they have the audacity to blame the truck driver. We are not driving your car.....YOU ARE.

The 4-wheelers are putting themselves as well as the truck driver who also has a family, in danger of a collision. Unfortunately, too many motorists have the feeling and attitude that trucks are at fault, and that trucks think they own the road.

If motorists only knew, they would change their driving habits. They would realize, "Oh, it's not the truck driver in most cases, it's me". Now, I'm not saying all truck drivers' don't do wrong. Some do. But when they are caught, they pay a heavy fine, or lose their license.

Truck drivers' are federally regulated. And can be pulled over and inspected any time a dot (dept of transportation) officer wants to pull them over. Check the log book, insurance, registration, fuel tax card, cdl, medical certificate, brakes, lights, horns, cleanliness, fire extinguisher, inside and out of the truck, cab, and trailer. Full inspection. Including a on the spot drug test. Cops don't need a reason to pull trucks over. Like tail light out, registration, seat belt, or any other reason. Trucks and the drivers are federally regulated. So that is why there are more professional truck drivers on the roads today than years before.

Big companies provide training, quality equipment, drug tests, background tests, good pay, stock options, medical, 401k, and so many other benefits. There are fewer ratty looking independent owners out there.

The standards for trucking have escalated to the highest possible standards in the country for the past 20-30 years or so. And the standards are always climbing, as high as possible. Tighter control. Stricter discipline, fines, imprisonment, etc.. When we say "professional truck driver" we mean it. Well trained and as safe as possible.

Today's truck drivers have a professional attitude, for the most part, and the pride that comes with driving a big rig. We tolerate the constant, daily mistakes that 4-wheelers make. Most truck drivers have learned patience. Just let the 4-wheeler go, without punishment. For they know not what they do. We just shake our heads and move on, as safely as possible. Truckers' are the heroes of the highway. If you are ever in a accident,

or need help, most of the time a trucker is the first one to pull over and help you out. We take pride in that. As you can see, not all truck drivers are ugly, nasty, unkempt, dirty, stinky, greasy, homeless looking, bums and creeps.

Most are clean, as showers are available at home, truck terminals, and all truck stops. They are men, women, of varying ethnic groups, and ages. And all are hard workers. Putting in long days. As noted before, truckers' are federally regulated.

We can't drive no more than 11hrs straight in a day, and must take 10hrs straight off for rest. We can't work more than 14hrs a day, combined driving and loading, unloading service. And no more than 70hrs in a 7day period. We typically cover between 500-700 miles a day. And minimum 3,000 miles a week. Which earns us from \$700-1000.00 a week, depending on company and years of experience.

As of this date. And most companies provide a food per diem. We get reimbursed for a certain cost of food each day. We generally stay out on the road approx 3-4weeks at a time, then take 3-5 days off. Depending on the company. If we're not moving, we're not making any money. We get paid by the mile. And live in our sleeper cabs, shower at truck stops, and rest every chance we can. So, you want to be a truck driver? No DUI's, no felonies, and eat a big breakfast, because it's going to be a long day. No matter how hard a truck driver may push his endurance level, he/she won't make that much more money. And it's not worth killing yourself over. No freight is worth dying for. We're not going to get rich doing this job. We have no reason to push too hard.

Just kick back, take your loads, get all the rest, and enjoy life. Many truckers use this opportunity to buy land, home, boats, cars, etc... so they can enjoy them later on. It makes no sense to pay rent on a place you'd only use once a month. Best to buy land or home, that way you own it. Many drivers' follow this route. Of course, people with families are a different story. Their own personal situation. Whatever works well for them.

DON'T SPEED UP!! LET ME OVER!! This happens to all of us. We have our turn signal on, trying to change lanes because we need to, and someone in the lane you are trying to get into, speeds up to cut you off. Then they honk and cuss at *you* as though you cut them off!! Now you're pissed, they are pissed and it could get worse.

Or, you're trying to get over, and the person **BEHIND** you changes lanes into the lane you're trying to get into, then speeds up to cut *you* off! And then has the nerve to act angry as if you were the one that cut them off.

And you're both pissed at each other. People, listen. We know what you're doing and why. Don't put yourself in danger by trying to purposely cut someone off that had the right of way to begin with. **DON'T SPEED UP ON PURPOSE TO BLOCK THEM!!** You put them and you in a accident situation. Not to mention some road rage. There is no reason to be in such a hurry. If you're late, you're late. Too bad. You can't do anything about it. Get up earlier in the morning. Don't take it out on other motorists on the road. Patience, goes a long way. Less stress, less wear and tear on your car. Truckers plan their trips accordingly. So we don't need to rush, or be in a panic, or stress. Many truck drivers' don't like going into big cities if we can help it.

Too many of the motorists are buzzing around like psycho bees, rushing, cutting everyone off, not letting people over, and are in too much of a hurry. We have to wade through the traffic mess. We'd rather go around whenever we have the opportunity. You'd think that if you live in a big city, where there is a lot of traffic, you'd know better by now that patience is better than stressing yourself out and being in such a panic rush all the time. What good is it hurrying around like that every day? Beating yourself and your car up? I grew up in Los Angeles.

I know all too well the stupidity and nonsense of rushing around in traffic. You practically use your car as a weapon. Rushing to not let someone change lanes in front of you, etc.. That's stupid. Relax, let em' over. What's the damn hurry?? Now that I've driven a Semi for over 5 years, I drive my car somewhat the same way. I'm slower than I was before truck driving. Not too slow. But I do the speed limit most times. I don't feel the need anymore to be in the panic rush of traffic. I just kick back and cruise it. I let people over. I slow to posted 35, or 45 mph so vehicles can get in and out of travel lanes, driveways, shopping centers, etc.. Slow down, and traffic will actually move better. Do this experiment. 1. Do the posted speed limit and watch how it effects the traffic around you. 2. Keep a relatively long distance space between you and the vehicle in front of you, when you are stuck in traffic.

Yes, somebody will most likely cut in, because they think that it's a opening. But if you stay back a bit, you may be able to keep rolling. But if you hug the bumper of the car in front of you, then you'll do the accordion affect. Forward, stop. Forward, stop. And so on. Stay back, and keep rolling. And for those that cut in to these so-called openings, stop doing that. You're not going to get ahead in the traffic. You're only helping to cause it to slow down.

That's why it's slow because people have to hit the brakes for people cutting in front of them. And cutting in at the last minute too. Merge earlier, stay in your lane unless you're exiting, and don't cut in front of people. Try to combat the accordion effect. 3. In traffic in cities and towns, slow down to the posted speed limit. Say, if it's 35, for example. And watch how much easier it is for cars and trucks to pull out into traffic lanes.

DON'T PASS ON RIGHT! During a truck's wide right turn to clear a street corner, or trying to get into a driveway. And especially in traffic. Some drivers' will scare you on purpose if you try to sneak by on the right while they are turning. To teach you a lesson. Be patient, or be hurt. During traffic on any road, but especially freeways, interstates. A truck may go around stopped vehicles on the side of the road.

Like police cars, broken down vehicles, tow trucks, etc.. for safety. So the trucks don't side swipe the people there. Then, in a short time, the truck will get back in the far right lane, unless it's a exit only, another freeway, or something. **HERE'S WHERE MOTORISTS GET THEMSELVES INTO TROUBLE.** They get impatient and want to zoom around the right side of the truck.

Right at the same time the truck driver decides to get back over into the far right land. Now the motorist is in his/her truck's blind spot. And can be run off the road into a ditch,

trees, off a bridge, or anywhere. Don't put yourself in harm's way. Flash your lights to get the truck back over. But don't get in the right lane. Stay where you are. Sometimes, actually, a lot of the time, trucks tend to almost wait too long to get back over. Leaving an opening for a 4-wheeler to jump in the right lane. When he/she finally decides to get over, you are sitting there, and he/she may not see you. Although they have 2-3 mirrors on that side, you still could be sitting in the blind spot. **STAY OUT OF THERE!!** And as a general rule, **IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE TRUCK'S MIRRORS, THE DRIVER CAN'T SEE YOU.** Stay out of harm's way and blind spots. Don't put yourself in danger. **DON'T PARK IN TRUCK PARKING!!!** at rest areas and travel centers. Cars and van can go anywhere, where as trucks cannot.

Smaller vehicles are taking a spot from a tired truck driver, and one that also must stop driving by law. According to the driver's log book. If you are driving a vehicle and towing a trailer of any kind, or driving a truck and towing a car. It's ok for the additional vehicle in your party to park behind you, and your trailer, **IN THE SAME PARKING SPOT.** Instead of taking up two parking spaces with all your vehicles.

TRUCKERS 4 AMERICA We truck drivers are keeping our eyes and ears open for any suspicious people or activity. Our government has given truckers' a special 800# to call and report. We cover every mile of this country every day. And we see a lot. Motorists drinking alcohol (beer) and driving. Smoking pot while driving, etc.. We are watching you!! We still have problems with people driving while holding a cell phone with one hand. You are a danger to yourself and everybody around you when you do that.

Invest \$10-20 and get yourself a hands free device. They make them in all styles, for comfort and reliability. They can go in your ear, on your ear, or like stereo headphones, over your head and softly on your ear. You will be a lot safer on the road if you invest in a much needed hands free cell phone device.

If you can afford the phone and the bill, you can afford to get a hands free.

One other thing of noteworthy importance. Many trucks, especially those of major companies, are speed governed. Computer controlled speed limit.

Some are governed to go no faster than 60 or 65, and some 70. So if you notice a truck trying to pass, and can't seem to. Then you know it's a speed governed truck.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO DOWNLOAD AND READ THIS.
PLEASE COPY & SEND TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW.**

It is my hope that I can contribute in some small way to saving lives and the safety of the motoring public out there on the roads every day.

Trucker Sue & my dog Kelly.

This free publication is given courtesy of TruckerSue.com and RowanKellyArt.com

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April 2009 and August 2012.