



INTRODUCTION

Driving comes with inherent risks, and it is the responsibility of all drivers on the road to help mitigate or eliminate those risks. Vehicle accidents occur every day on the road. A majority of accidents that occur on the road are preventable. Whether an employee is driving a commercial or passenger vehicle, employees should do all they can to avoid accidents while driving. Listed are some basic guidelines that professional drivers should use to help avoid accidents while on the road.

GET PLENTY OF REST

Professional drivers should get plenty of rest before driving; this includes drivers of passenger vehicles. Driving while fatigued is nearly as bad as driving while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. To help avoid driving while tired, professional drivers should do the following:

- Get between 7-8 hours of sleep.
- If you are making a long trip and start to feel tired, pull off the road at a safe area and take a nap or stop for the evening.
- Do NOT exceed your permitted driving hours.

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Professional drivers should plan their routes. Whether you are driving a commercial or passenger vehicle, it is important to know where you are going and how to get there. When planning your trip, employees should do the following:

- Call your dispatcher or the customer for directions.
 - Your dispatcher will be the best help, but truckers may talk to someone in the shipping or receiving department as they are more familiar with the docking area.
- Get a road map and ensure that you use it. A Global Positioning System (GPS) can be great a tool, but it can fail or give wrong directions if it hasn't been updated with the latest information.
- Ensure that your GPS is updated.
- Input the address before you leave.
- Preplan your stops to help you with your driving and break times.
- If possible, check the traffic conditions of your destination prior to leaving. Try to plan your arrival for low traffic periods.

CHECK AND ADJUST TO WEATHER CONDITIONS

Due to how fast weather can change, professional drivers should be prepared for any weather condition on the road. To help plan and adjust for changes in the weather, employees should do the following:

- Inspect and change out windshield wipers before leaving.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Ensure that you have snow chains if you are going to an area known for snow.
- Slow down in wet or icy conditions.
- Pull over if conditions are too severe for driving.



DRIVING: AVOIDING ACCIDENTS

MINIMIZE LANE CHANGES

Professional drivers should minimize how many lane changes that they do. To help minimize lane changes, professional drivers should do the following:

- Pick a lane and stay in it for as long as possible.
- When driving on a road with more than two lanes, avoid merging vehicles by staying in the 2nd lane from the right. This leaves the far right lane open for vehicles to enter the freeway.
- Watch vehicles that are merging onto the freeway.
- If you do need to change lanes, check your mirrors and be aware of your blind spots.
- Only change lanes when it safe to do so.

SPEED LIMITS

Speed is one of the biggest contributors to accidents. Professional drivers should do the following when driving:

- Do NOT exceed posted speed limits.
- Adjust your speed to the length and weight of your vehicle.
- Slow down in wet or icy conditions.
- Slow down in construction zones.

MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS

The risk of driving has increased with the multiple distractions that drivers experience these days. Distractions are a big contributor to accidents. To help minimize distractions, employees should do the following:

- Do NOT text, talk, watch videos, or check email on a cell phone, laptop, etc. All portable electric devices should be put in a safe place before leaving. A text or phone call can wait until you are in a safe place and not driving.
- Set up your radio before leaving.
- Do NOT eat or drink while driving.
- Do NOT apply cosmetics while driving.
- Keep radio talks short and to the point. Radios should be kept as close as possible to minimize reaching.
- Do NOT reach for items while driving.

WATCH FOR PROBLEM DRIVERS

The reality of the world is that not every driver is a safe driver. Professional drivers should watch the actions of other drivers and adjust their driving to help avoid an accident. Be aware of any vehicle that is drifting into their lane or swerving intermittently. Give problem drivers enough distance and space so that the chances of an accident are minimized.

CONCLUSION

Driving has and will always be a risky task. While professional drivers cannot control the actions of others on the road, they can control their own actions. Every driver should do their part to help minimize the chances of an accident. By following the guidelines presented in this lesson, professional drivers can limit the number of an accidents that occur on the road.

