

The Four Critical Crashes

Rear-end crashes typically result in severe losses and can be catastrophic for everyone involved. Preventing rear-end crashes requires drivers to recognize the hazards that increase the odds of a crash, know the defense, and react properly. Read the information below, and ask yourself how you can improve your vigilance and driving style.

LANE CHANGE CRASHES

A lane change crash occurs when a driver moves into an adjacent lane and strikes another vehicle or object.

Contributing factors: Making frequent or abrupt lane changes. Blind spots. Mismanaging the space around the truck. Failing to use turn signals. Failing to use mirrors, or to keep mirrors clean, or adjusted properly.

Crash-prevention techniques: Stay in one lane as much as possible. Make quick glances to mirrors. Keep mirrors clean and properly adjusted. Use the “lean and look” method to monitor blind spots. When exiting, move in the exit lane well in advance and use the turn signal.

LOSS OF CONTROL CRASHES

Loss of control crashes include jackknives, lane departures (when one or more tires are off the road surface), rollovers, and steer tire blowouts resulting in losing control of the vehicle and causing a crash.

Contributing factors: Losing traction due to wet or dry surfaces (jackknives). Driving while distracted (lane departures). Traveling too fast on a ramp or curve (rollovers). Striking a pothole (steer tire blowout).

Crash-prevention techniques: Pre-trip inspections. Observe the proper speed for conditions. Avoid distractions. Be attentive to the road ahead. Know how to straighten the truck if a jackknife occurs.

REAR-END CRASHES

A rear-end crash is when a vehicle does not stop in time to avoid hitting the back of the vehicle directly in front.

Contributing factors: Following too closely or tailgating. Speeding. Driving too fast for the conditions. Driving while distracted. Brakes improperly adjusted. Insufficient tire tread depth. Slippery surfaces.

Crash-prevention techniques: Maintain proper following distance. Avoid distractions. Drive 2-3 mph below the flow of traffic, not to exceed the speed limit. Adjust speed to the conditions. Maintain equipment properly.

RUN UNDER CRASHES

A run under crash – including a right-turn squeeze collision – is when a vehicle impacts the side of the truck and runs under the trailer.

Contributing factors: Blocking oncoming traffic. Missing reflective tape or malfunctioning trailer lights. Making U-turns or wide right turns. Misjudging the speed of oncoming traffic when turning.

Crash-prevention techniques: Yield to oncoming traffic. Do not make U-turns. Use traffic control assistance and a spotter if required to back up across travel lanes. Keep the rear of the trailer close to the curb when making a right-hand turn. Time left turns so the trailer does not block intersections.

Note: These lists are not intended to be all-inclusive.

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Lane Change Crashes

Lane change crashes can often be prevented if the truck driver recognizes the hazards that increase the risk of a crash and applies the right defensive driving techniques. Read the information below, then ask yourself how you can improve your driving to prevent lane change crashes.

RECOGNIZE THE HAZARDS



ENVIRONMENT

Traffic, in general, makes it challenging to manage the space around the truck. Traffic congestion and work zones increase the risk. Adverse weather, including mud, ice, and snow reduces visibility.



EQUIPMENT

Blind spots all around the truck are a major factor in lane change crashes. Vibration can cause mirrors to become misaligned, affecting visibility, while damaged or inoperable mirrors and turn signals create hazards.



PERSONAL BEHAVIORS

Frequent or abrupt lane changes increase the risk of a crash. Likewise, forcing the truck into another driver's lane or failing to use the mirrors and turn signals before changing lanes can lead to a crash.

KNOW THE DEFENSE



MAINTAIN ONE LANE

Avoid frequent lane changes by keeping in your lane as much as possible. When a lane change is necessary, make sure it is safe and legal to do so. Use the mirrors and the "lean and look" method to make sure the adjacent lane is clear. Activate the turn signal well in advance, then change lanes gradually.



MAINTAIN PROPER FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Keep at least six seconds following distance behind the vehicle in front, and add more distance if additional hazards are present. This allows you to check the side mirrors and manage the space around the vehicle.



BE ATTENTIVE TO THE ROAD AHEAD

Make periodic, quick glances to the mirrors, and then return your focus to the road ahead.



OBSERVE PROPER SPEED FOR CONDITIONS

Drive 2-3 mph slower than the speed of traffic, not to exceed the speed limit. This creates a natural gap and allows you to perceive hazards faster and react without making abrupt lane changes.



AVOID DISTRACTIONS

Put away mobile devices and avoid other distractions. This allows you to focus on the task of driving and be ready to react to hazards such as a passenger vehicle or truck cutting in front of your truck.



VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

Check side and fender-mounted mirrors before driving to ensure they are in proper working order and alignment. Pull over if the mirrors need adjusting. Repair inoperable equipment before leaving on a trip.

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