

Arming the transportation industry with safety solutions

Merging & Changing Lanes

Collisions frequently occur when traffic merges from one lane into another. These merging maneuvers usually occur at highway on/off ramps, at the juncture of two or more highways blending together in the same direction, and on local streets and highways as the roads narrow or available lanes are reduced due to construction, lane obstructions, etc. Merging in traffic is one situation where the limitations of a large truck are most noticeable.

PREVENTABLE COLLISIONS

Most highway merging collisions are considered "preventable" on the part of the professional driver. The best way to reduce these incidents is to ensure all drivers are trained on how to avoid merging collisions, particularly those collisions that are due to driving inexperience, visibility and "blind spots." Drivers must be especially aware of their "blind spots" which prevent them from seeing other motorists.

According to a report by Motor Carrier Safety Service, one of the most common merging or lane change collisions between trucks and passenger vehicles occurs when the passenger vehicle is traveling slightly in front and to the right of the truck. These collisions occur when the passenger vehicle is traveling in the lane to the right of the truck about one car length forward of the front truck bumper. This is due to the truck driver's blind spot typically extending from eleven feet behind his front bumper to twelve feet six inches in front of it. Compact cars are usually less than 14 feet in length, therefore potentially invisible to the truck driver when in this spot.

Be sure to always watch for any vehicle around your truck that may be moving into your blind spots. These blind spots vary between different types of equipment, so make sure to familiarize yourself with the blind spots of the vehicle you are driving every time.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS

- » Before beginning a trip, properly adjust the driver's seat and clean and adjust all mirrors in order to minimize blind spots.
- » Stay in the right hand lanes when possible to avoid congestive traffic patterns.
- » Avoid unnecessary lane changes. Don't let impatience control your actions.
- » Stay attentive...never take your guard down or let complacency set in.



- » While driving, scan your mirrors often so you know what is around your vehicle
- » Manage your space by making certain you have enough space to complete your maneuver before you make your move.
- » Communicate your intentions to merge or change lanes to other drivers by turning on your turn signals before you begin your maneuver. A minimum of 3 blinks of your signal is recommended or, not less than 100 feet in advance of the merge.
- » Once you determine it is safe for a lane change, do so promptly before another vehicle makes a move into that clear zone.
- » After you pass, make sure the vehicle you just passed has the proper following distance behind you and has not accelerated, before you lane change back in front of it.
- » If you had sight of a vehicle and all of a sudden it "disappears," it is most likely in your blind spot. Do not lane change until you determine its location. Otherwise a collision will occur.
- » Be prepared to respond to the changing movement of each vehicle near you, including their speeding up to prevent you from changing lanes.
- » Anticipate and prepare for unexpected actions of other motorists.
- » Practice patience when other drivers cut in front of your vehicle or make erratic moves. Slow down and recreate your safe following distance.
- » NEVER respond to road rage. Don't let other motorists' bad behavior influence your response or your safe driving behavior. Maintain your professionalism!
- » Avoid lane changes at: intersections, railroad crossings and while driving around curbs.
- » Watch for pedestrians as well as vehicles.
- » Be prepared to yield the right-of-way to other motorists as necessary to accommodate the entry of any other vehicle into the traffic flow. As a professional driver, you have added responsibility to yield the right-of-way when necessary to avoid a collision, or when it will help another driver to make a needed move. Professional drivers ALWAYS give the right-of-way, regardless of whether the other driver is right or wrong.

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The Shield
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Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. Merging maneuvers usually occur where?
 - a. At highway on/off ramps
 - b. At the juncture of two or more highways blending together
 - c. Where available lanes are reduced due to construction
 - d. All of the above
2. A truck driver's blind spot typically extends from _____ feet behind his front bumper to twelve feet six inches in front of it
 - a. fourteen
 - b. eleven
 - c. eight
 - d. none of the above
3. Once you determine it is safe for a lane change, do so promptly before _____.
 - a. another vehicle makes a move into that clear zone.
 - b. signaling.
 - c. the other vehicle becomes aware of your intention.
 - d. none of the above
4. If you had sight of a vehicle and all of a sudden it _____, it is most likely in your blind spot.
 - a. accelerates
 - b. disappears
 - c. collides with another vehicle
 - d. all of the above
5. Professional drivers only give the right-of-way when the other driver is right.
 - a. True
 - b. False

