CMVs – Safe Driving Behavior for Commercial Motor Vehicles



Key Takeaways:

- Recognizing the undesirable driving habits which cause majority of commercial motor vehicle crashes
- Understanding driver pre-trip responsibilities for the avoidance of crashes
- Learning safe driver responsibilities and desired driving behaviors on the road
- Identifying and learning how to address potential roadway hazards

Course Description

Annually, there are approximately 3,500 people killed and 80,000 others injured in accidents involving Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMVs) in the Untied States alone.

Anytime you are driving a Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV), your top responsibility is to drive safely. Whenever a CMV weighing 10,000 pounds or more smashes into a car weighing 4,000 pounds, the car always loses; the responsibilities of driving a commercial motor vehicle are massive.

Recently, it was discovered that the majority of crashes are caused by four types of undesirable driver behavior: recognition, decision, performance, and non-performance errors. Below are some examples of each.

Recognition Errors:

- Taking your eyes off the road and reading a map
- Calling someone or texting while driving
- Being distracted by dashboard indicators
- Concentrating on something outside the vehicle while driving, such as a delivery address or interesting event

Decision Errors:

- Speeding above safe conditions
- Tailgating
- Underestimating another vehicle’s speed or distance
- Failing to avoid a road hazard
- Road rage

Performance Errors:

- Freezing
- Panicking
- Slamming the brakes
- Swerving

Non-Performance Errors:

    - Intoxication
    - Fatigue
    - Poor health

The probability of a safe trip increases when drivers prepare themselves and their vehicle before all trips. Workers especially have the obligation to come prepared to drive as licensed drivers of commercial motor vehicles; they must be well rested and not under the influence of drugs, either legal or illegal, or alcohol. As well, safety professionals need to emphasize the importance of coming to work ready to drive.

Here are some basic principles for safely operating a Commercial Motor Vehicle.

At the very least, drivers need to possess a valid driver license, maintain a lawful status to drive, and always use seatbelts when operating a CMV. It is worthwhile to perform background checks for commercial drivers, as it can prevent ugly situations and minimize the risk of serious liability.

Prior to any trip, drivers must inspect the engine, cab, exterior, wheels, and load. Often to save time, drivers neglect this important check step to get on the road because many drivers do not make money while sitting in port. Nonetheless, unless cargo is delivered safely, no one profits from the arrangement; accidents are costly for commercial motor vehicle drivers and for the companies that employ them.

Practicing defensive driving is the basis for all good driving habits. Drivers who are alert and aware of what is going on, can react to a variety of possible hazards, such as unsafe drivers, changing weather conditions, changing traffic conditions, and road construction. Drivers who drive defensively allow for more reaction time and better options to avoid crashing.

During poor weather conditions, the ability to see, steer, and brake decrease. Rainy conditions should push drivers to decrease speed by one third, whereas for snowy conditions drivers should decrease speed by one half. Anytime that you are in doubt, you should add extra seconds between your vehicle and the vehicle ahead.

For CMVs, blind spots are particularly dangerous when reversing. Ahead of backing up, ensure the backup alarm is working, to warn people near the vehicle. Exit the vehicle and inspect the area of travel, to guarantee that it is free from obstructions. If you can, use a spotter to help guide you into the spot you’re backing into.

Your low light eyesight diminishes with age, causing slower reaction times to complete defensive actions. When you are driving at night, evaluating risks associated with road conditions and obstructions, animals, and pedestrians is more difficult than during daytime. Additional nighttime hazards include but are not limited to driving with a single or weak headlight, momentary blindness caused by looking into the headlights of oncoming traffic, and driving at a speed where your headlights do not illuminate hazards quick enough to react safely.