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Inside this issue:

City driving: Being alert to the challenges 1

Safety focus: Watch where you park 3

Take action to support heart health..... 4

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City driving: Being alert to the challenges

City driving requires a driver’s undivided attention. Heavy traffic, narrow streets, and obstructed views are just some of the challenges the professional driver faces when operating in the city. He/she needs to be alert to the challenges and potential dangers associated with city driving. When driving in the city a driver should:

- Stay on posted routes;
- Manage speed and space — allowing for plenty of room to maneuver;
- Be alert at all times;
- Never focus on one object or event — continually scan a block or two ahead and check the vehicle’s mirrors;
- Be aware of traffic signals;
- Watch for signs; and

- Keep an eye out for bicycles and pedestrians.

Intersections

Crossing an intersection with a long vehicle can be a difficult maneuver. The driver must take into account the vehicle’s additional length and slower acceleration (compared to a personal vehicle) when making the decision to cross an intersection.

A driver should always stop at an intersection or unmarked crossing, and always assume he/she does not have the right of way.

After stopping, he/she should proceed slowly. This allows the driver to stop again before crossing. He/she should look to the left, then right, and then left again before pulling into the intersection.

At a crosswalk, pedestrians and bicyclists are often hidden from a driver’s line of sight. The driver also must yield the right of way to pedestrians when turning on green.

The approach at a controlled intersection is very similar. The driver should stop two times. First, at the stop sign or light, then again after easing forward to a point where he/she can clearly see oncoming traffic.

Turning

Good judgment, proper speed control, and accurate steering are all important in executing safe turns.



(continued on page 2)

City driving: Being alert to the challenges *(continued from page 1)*

When approaching an intersection, the driver needs to adjust the vehicle's speed. The sharper the turn, the slower the vehicle should be moving. The driver must shift into the correct gear before the turn and complete the turn in the same gear.

When making a **right turn**, a semi-trailer must pull further into the intersection than a smaller vehicle to avoid hitting the curb. One basic rule of thumb, is to get about one-half of the rig past the corner before beginning the turn.

During the turn, the driver should watch the vehicle's right mirror for the position of the trailer's wheels, and watch for vehicles that may have moved between the curb and the rig from the time the maneuver started.

When executing a **left turn**, the driver must turn from as far right as possible to allow plenty of room for the tractor. If he/she turns too soon or too tightly, off-tracking may cause the left side of the vehicle to hit another vehicle. The driver should watch the vehicle's left mirror before, during, and after the turn.

Roundabouts

When approaching a roundabout, a driver should watch for signs to assist in selecting the appropriate lane and slow down. He/she should yield to pedestrians and bicyclists as well as traffic on the left that is already in the roundabout.

The driver should enter the roundabout when there is a safe gap in traffic, and then maintain a low speed within the roundabout. As he/she approaches his/her exit, he/she should turn on the vehicle's right signal, and make sure to yield to pedestrians and bicycles when exiting the roundabout.

Drivers of large vehicles need to take additional steps to ensure safe navigation through a roundabout. A large truck is expected to stay in its lane when approaching a roundabout. When navigating a roundabout, there will be times that the trailer may track into other lanes, the driver may have to use all available space, or his/her vehicle may have to use the truck apron. A truck apron is a paved area on the inside of the roundabout that is used by trucks when off-tracking.

When making a right turn, the vehicle may need more space than what is provided in the lane of travel, and in some cases the vehicle may need all available space. The driver should be alert for surrounding traffic, and as he/she enters the roundabout, proceed with caution.

When making a left turn, the driver should select the lane that allows him/her to keep traffic on his/her "sight side," if possible. The driver should check for surrounding traffic and when clear, enter the roundabout, keeping in mind

that the trailer may off-track onto the truck apron. The mirrors should be continually checked until the truck clears the roundabout.

GPS use

When driving in an unfamiliar city, a global positioning system (GPS) navigation system can be of help in finding a destination, if the right type of device is used.

It is key to remember that all GPSs do not perform the same tasks. A general GPS is intended for personal vehicle use. The professional driver needs a device that is designed for his/her specific driving tasks.

A GPS designed for the professional driver includes information addressing truck routes, low overpasses, and axle limits.

All relevant information should be entered into the GPS prior to the driver beginning his/her trip. This includes:

- Vehicle length, width, height;
- Axle weights; and
- Hazardous materials being transported (if applicable).

The driver should follow the route suggested by the GPS, but should pay attention and obey traffic signs and advisories, especially if they provide restrictions and/or directions the GPS did not alert the driver to.

Expressways

The weight of a vehicle's load as well as the ramp's length and degree of turn will determine how much time the driver has to get his/her vehicle up to speed to safely merge with oncoming traffic. The size of the vehicle will determine how much space is needed to enter traffic.

When entering traffic, the driver should:

- Size up the traffic;
- Signal early;
- Watch for an opening;
- Build up speed to merge smoothly;
- Watch the vehicle's mirrors; and
- Watch for oncoming traffic.



When leaving an expressway, the driver should:

- Signal and get into the turn lane as soon as possible;
- Check the vehicle's mirrors to monitor the speed of the traffic that is behind the vehicle on the ramp; and
- Shift down to a lower gear and make the exit.

Safety focus: Watch where you park

When picking a place to park, always consider the odds that your vehicle is going to be hit if left there!

Drivers should be able to look at a parking location and determine the risks involved in parking there, versus somewhere else. Some places, such as the shoulder of the road, are obvious locations where a driver should not want to park due to the risks involved.



However, less obvious are locations where the risks are more subtle. Examples of these include parking next to a “high flow area” at a truck stop (such as next to the fuel pumps) or at the end of the row in a tight truck parking area.

Beware of yellow poles

Yellow poles are designed to be a barrier to prevent individuals from driving their vehicle into objects that shouldn't be driven into — like diesel pumps, buildings, and weigh scales. Striking them with your vehicle can be “painful” in many ways and possibly even cause a rollover.

As a driver, the main thing to remember when approaching truck stops, fueling areas, weigh scales, or loading/unloading areas is that you need to be highly alert to your surroundings. Usually, you will be coming off of the highway where you were going 55 miles per hour or more. Taking a moment to scan these surroundings for yellow poles (which are relatively small) will enable you to change your mindset and “see the big picture.” You'll see the traffic, pedestrians, and tight spaces you need to maneuver through.

Parking in tight spaces

Maneuvering in tight spaces can be tricky. In fact, it requires just about every skill you possess as a driver. Many accidents occur in tight areas, even though being in these areas accounts for only a small portion of overall driving time.

The key to safe maneuvering is knowing what's around you. Follow these tips:

- **Plan movements ahead of time.** Don't make “snap” decisions.
- **Keep your speed down and take your time.** If you are traveling too fast, you might not



have the time to make a correction to avoid hitting the obstacle.

- **Look for traffic flow or directional instructions.** Going the wrong way can create problems.
 - **Try to be completely done maneuvering so that your vehicle is straight before you enter a tight area.** Remember to take the tractor wide so the tanker can fit (off tracking).
 - **Get out of the cab and look.** Realize that there is always a blind spot and it changes as you move because your position changes. It's far better to straighten out and then restart a turning or backing procedure than to hit another vehicle or person.
 - **Check for obstructions and overhead clearances.** Damage could result from hitting an overhead obstruction or a power line.
 - **Make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted.** Using all of your mirrors allows the best perspective of your maneuver.
 - **Maintain an aggressive scan pattern when maneuvering.** Do not stare at just one thing.
 - **Use your flashers.** This alerts other vehicles or pedestrians to your maneuver.
 - **Turn off the radio.** Listen for noises outside of your cab.
 - **Be alert.** A vehicle or pedestrian could move into that blind spot at any time.
 - **Use the lowest gear at idle speed.** Take it slow and do not accelerate or ride the clutch.
 - **Keep track of both sides as you move.** If possible, use a spotter. Remember, even with a spotter you are still responsible.
 - **Position your vehicle for the next movement.** Don't worry about just getting to the pumps or scale, but position yourself so you can leave the pumps or scale safely and easily.
 - **Avoid backing on your passenger or blind side.** If you must, be very careful, because this gives you the largest blind spot. Be sure that you can track your progress in your right-hand mirror.
- Think ahead when entering a tight space. Find all the yellow poles...and every other hazard in the area. By following these few simple practices, you'll be better equipped to avoid problems.



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Take action to support heart health

"He who has health has hope; and he who has hope, has everything."

Arabian Proverb



Lower your chances of heart disease by keeping risk factors in check.

Heart disease is responsible for 1 in 4 male deaths, but many men may not realize when their life is at risk.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) points out that half of the men who die suddenly of coronary heart disease did not experience symptoms.

To lower your risk for heart disease, it's important to stay on top of heart health risk factors, such as blood pressure and cholesterol levels. In addition, make lifestyle choices that support cardiovascular health. To support heart health:

Bring on healthy foods. A heart-healthy diet includes a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, skinless poultry, and fish. Select low-fat dairy products and eat fewer processed foods. Choose foods that are low in saturated and trans fat, and high in fiber, to help lower cholesterol. Limiting salt can help lower blood pressure; flavor your food with herbs instead. Also limit red meat and sweets.

Burn calories with activity. Being active can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, such as brisk walking or biking. If you can't set aside a long period of time for daily exercise, fit several 10-minute bouts of exercise into your day.



Don't smoke. About 1 in 6 men smoke cigarettes, according to the CDC. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease and stroke, as well as cancer. It damages the way the heart functions and also harms the structure of blood vessels.

Limit alcohol. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. If you drink, do so moderately — up to two drinks per day for men and one for women.

Get regular checkups. Ask your doctor if your weight is in a healthy range, and have your blood pressure checked. High blood pressure has no symptoms and is a risk factor for heart disease. Also ask your health care provider about cholesterol levels, as high cholesterol is also a key risk factor, and talk about additional steps you can take to lower your risk for heart disease.

Risk factors for heart disease:

- High blood pressure
- High LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- A poor diet
- Physical inactivity