

Passenger car drivers: Share the road safely with large trucks

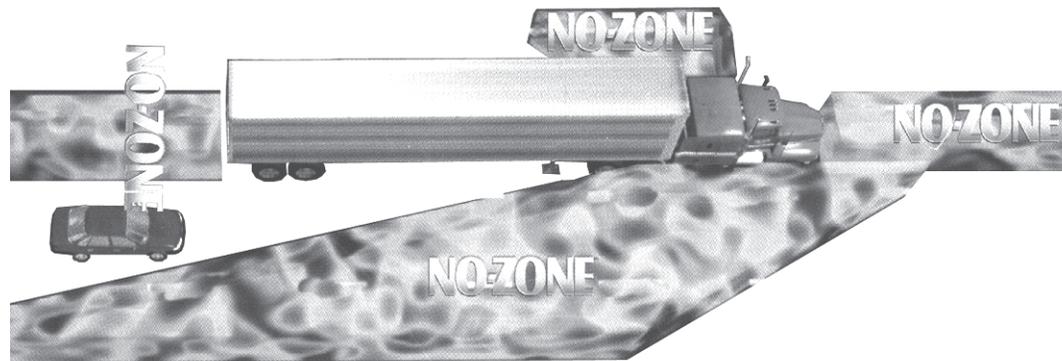
There are simple rules for the driver of a passenger vehicle to follow when travelling behind and alongside large trucks:

BLIND SPOTS – Never stay in any of the four blind spots, or “No-Zones,” around trucks. There is a “No-Zone” along each of the four sides of a truck. Never drive directly behind or on the right side of a truck, as you are not visible to the driver. When driving on the left side, remember: if you cannot see the driver’s side view mirror, then you are in a blind spot. If you cannot see the mirror, the trucker cannot see you! Lastly, never get in front of a truck unless you can see the entire front of the truck in your rear view mirror.

SAFE PASSING – If you are passing a truck, always pass on the left side, and make sure to allow plenty of room before switching back in front of the truck. It takes longer for a truck to stop than a car, so truckers need more space in front of them than cars do. Do not cut into this “margin of safety.”

- Don’t take needless chances. Always make sure you have room to complete your pass without having to resort to excessive speed.
- Check traffic to the front and rear. Signal and change lanes when it is safe and legal to do so. Pass only where it is safe - never where you will have to complete your pass in a no-passing zone.

- When you do pass, complete the pass as promptly as traffic conditions permit. If you linger alongside the cab, you may be in a position where the truck driver cannot see you in the mirrors. If the truck driver has to change lanes for any reason, your car could be involved in a crash because you were in a position where the truck driver could not see you.
- Signal and return to the right lane when you can see the front of the truck in your inside mirror. After passing, keep your speed up. Passing a vehicle and then slowing down is both dangerous and irritating.



- Avoid pulling in front of a truck when traffic may stop or slow down. By doing so you take away the truck driver’s margin of safety and risk causing a crash. The trucking industry stresses the importance of safe following distance.
- If a truck passes you, help the truck driver to pass safely by slowing down slightly to shorten the time required to pass. Never speed up. That is dangerous and illegal.
- When you meet a truck going the other way, keep as far to the right as you safely can for a greater margin of safety and to minimize wind turbulence.

SAFE FOLLOWING – Don’t follow a truck too closely; not only are you not visible to the trucker, but it takes greater response time to maneuver around a large vehicle. Other hazards to passenger vehicles include tire blow-outs or flying objects.

- If you follow a truck closely, you are driving blind. You can’t see around the truck and the truck driver can’t see you in the mirrors. Never follow a truck at a time interval of less than two seconds. To check your following distance, pick a landmark on the side of the road. When the rear of the truck passes that point count 1001, 1002 at a normal rate. If you pass the same point before you have finished counting 1002, you are following too close.

- If you edge out to the left to see if there is room to pass, you may find yourself face-to-face with an oncoming vehicle that you could have seen if you had been following at a safe distance.

- You may hit a pothole or debris that the truck has safely passed over.

- If you are following too closely, you may be unable to avoid a rear-end collision with the truck.

- Never use your high-beams when following a truck at night. The glare in the large side mirrors can blind the truck driver.

- Avoid stopping too close behind a truck on an upgrade. If the truck rolls back when starting up, your car could be damaged. Also, if you stop a little to either side of the truck, the truck driver will be able to see your car in the mirrors.

BACKING – Truck drivers often must back from the street into a loading area. If you see a truck driver attempting to back, stop and give him/her a chance to do so safely. Never attempt to drive around a backing truck. You are likely to get out of the truck driver's field of view and may be needlessly involved in a crash.

MERGING – When travelling in the right lane, you should move over to allow a truck to merge or exit. Be careful when pulling behind a truck which has just entered the highway; it takes a lot longer for a large truck to get up to speed.

RIGHT TURNS – Did you ever feel the back of your car go up over the curb when making a right turn? On every vehicle, the rear wheels follow a shorter path than the front wheels. The longer the vehicle, the shorter the path followed by the rear wheels. This is called off-track.

- Off-track occurs on both left and right turns, but presents a greater safety problem on right turns where a truck driver may have to first move to the left so the rear wheels won't jump the curb.
- Resist the temptation to pass on the right of a truck which is approaching an intersection. If the truck driver makes a right turn, you could be caught between the truck and the curb.

WEIGH STATIONS – Trucks will be slowing down to enter weigh stations, and slow when reentering the highway from weigh stations.

SLOW TRAFFIC BELONGS IN RIGHT LANES – Trucks are only allowed in the two right most lanes. If you are travelling below the speed limit, by law you must travel in the right lane. This will allow trucks to pass you

in the second lane if necessary.

OTHER HINTS:

- Some trucks are required by law to stop at railroad crossings. Be alert and allow the truck driver to stop and to resume travel safely if no train is approaching.

- IF YOU ARE THE FIRST VEHICLE to arrive at an intersection with a traffic signal or stop sign, stay behind the white stopping line. Trucks need the space in front of the line to safely complete turns.

- Research reveals that passenger car drivers made mistakes in 70 percent of the fatal crashes involving large trucks. While everyone is entitled to make a mistake, colliding with a truck could be your last one.

YOU are your best protection on the highway.

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES
Bureau of Safety and Enforcement
Commercial Vehicle Safety Division
60 State Street
Wethersfield, CT 06161
Greater Hartford Area: 860-263-5447

Z-14 Rev. 5/06

Don't Hang in the No-Zone



M. Jodi Rell
Governor

Robert M. Ward
Commissioner

State of Connecticut
Department of Motor Vehicles
60 State Street
Wethersfield, CT 06161

ct.gov/dmv