
Trucking in Gage County

The opening of the ethanol plant near Adams and the Bio-diesel plant in Beatrice will bring a significant number of new trucks to Highway 77 and Highway 41 everyday. It might be of lifesaving importance for all of us to review safety rules when sharing the road with trucks. Werner Trucking of Omaha shared with me five safety tips for sharing the road with trucks.

RULE ONE: Trucks should leave extra room behind the vehicles they follow, because it takes them twice as long to stop when an emergency stop is required. More than 60 percent of fatal car-truck accidents involve impact with the front of the truck. Cars passing trucks need to be aware of two dangers. If they pull in ahead of the truck before they can see the whole truck in their rearview mirror they are in a No-Zone area where the truck can have blind spots due to the hood and if an emergency stop is required the car is likely the loser. Braking when you pull in to close, or even slowdowns for other traffic, intersections, turns or road hazards places both the car and the truck in a hazardous situation.

RULE TWO: Stay out of the No-Zones. Like cars, trucks have a blind spot on either side where cars can be briefly hidden from view in the mirrors. Unlike cars, trucks also have fairly large blind spots behind the truck and directly in front of the hood. My older brother Randy lives in Paw Paw, Michigan about three blocks from where a rather dramatic demonstration of the front blind spot occurred when an automated wheelchair accidentally scooted in front of a truck. The truck driver's attention had been diverted by a car making an improper turn, caused by the person in the car also trying to avoid the wheelchair. The wheelchair patron suddenly was in for the ride of their life at 35 miles per hour on the front bumper. The truck driver pulled in a shop to check his truck some 3 miles down the road and was as white as the guy in the wheelchair when they realized what had happened. Lucky no one was injured. The wheelchair needed a pit stop for new wheels. Often when trucks need to make a right turn they will move a bit left to gain room. Car drivers moving into this No-Zone may get the old squeeze and crush play under the rear duals.

RULE THREE: If you can't see at least one mirror on the truck cab, you are likely in the trucks rear No-Zone. The only view you have of the road ahead is the "how am I driving" note on the back of the truck. Any road emergency is going to place you and everyone in your car in immediate danger. Over 70 percent of all car accidents involving trucks are caused by the car drivers error. The back of the truck is just slightly less dangerous than the front.

RULE FOUR: Always buckle up! The single most important thing you can do to save your life if a car accident occurs with a truck is to buckle your seat belt. This rule is just the same in the case of any other kind of traffic accident.

RULE FIVE: More than 2400 people are killed in highway shoulder collisions each year. If the tire goes flat get the car clear off the road way. Be very certain there is no traffic coming before exiting the vehicle. Likewise if trucks are in trouble along the roadway slow down and move to the right as much as possible to avoid the possibility of hitting the driver examining his vehicle.

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