



HAZ ALERT

Semi Drivers Killed due to Rear-End Collisions

Case #1: A 50-year-old male truck driver was traveling after dark on an unlit highway, when he unknowingly approached a semi that had slowed to a stop due to road construction. With only a few feet to spare, the operator attempted to brake and swerve to the right, but failed to avoid collision on the driver's side of his truck. The truck driver was speaking on his cellular device at the time of the incident, although it is unclear if he was using a Bluetooth or other hands-free device. He died at the scene.

Case #2: A 57-year-old male truck driver was traveling during daylight hours along the interstate, when he approached a truck traveling at 55 mph with its emergency flashers engaged. Both trucks were in the right-side lane. At the last second, the operator braked and swerved, attempting to avoid a collision, but struck the slower vehicle. The entire driver's side of the semi truck was completely sheered off. Despite the fact that the driver was wearing a seatbelt, he was ejected and killed.

What steps can be made to prevent such incidents?

- Motor carriers should consistently train their drivers on the importance of speed and space management.
- Maintain awareness of distracted drivers sharing the road.
- Reduce distractions. Limit hands-free cell phone use to emergencies only.
- Perform a thorough pre-trip and post-trip inspection to ensure your brakes, turn signals and headlights are in good working order.
- Buckle up! Safety restraint use can save your life.

HOW YOU CAN PREVENT REAR-END COLLISIONS

- **Carriers should consistently train their drivers on the importance of speed and space management.** Safety training being provided by management plays an integral role in the reduction of rear-end collisions as well as many other injuries. Trainings should focus on factors that influence the minimum amount of space needed, such as weather conditions, speed, total weight of the truck, and traffic.
- **Maintain awareness of distracted drivers sharing the road.** The road is a more dangerous place to drive now than it ever has been. One contributing factor is the distracted driving habits of other people that share the road. Many people are unaware of the required stopping distance of a fully loaded semi-truck and may pull directly out in front of you or swerve into your path. Maintain awareness of other vehicles at all times when they are in your vicinity so that you will have proper time to react to their movements.
- **Reduce distractions. Limit hands-free cell phone use to emergencies only.** As of January 2012, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) released rulings that ban both texting and using a handheld cell-phone device while driving a commercial truck. Research has shown that the odds of being in a crash are 23.2 times higher for commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operators who text while driving.¹
- **Perform a thorough pre-trip and post-trip inspection to ensure your brakes, turn indicators and headlights are in good working order.** The FMCSA mandates that every commercial driver must complete a pre-trip inspection before the beginning of each work day to ensure good working order of brakes, turn signals, and headlights.²
- **Buckle up! If all else fails, restraint use can save your life.** The FMCSA requires that a seatbelt is used in any CMV that has one installed in the driver's seat.³ Wearing a seatbelt should be non-negotiable when occupying a CMV. Research has shown that in a semi truck collision, the odds of being injured are 2.25 times higher for both semi truck drivers and sleeper berth occupants who do not wear occupant safety restraints compared to those who do.⁴

References:

¹Hickman, JS., Hanowski, R. (2012) An assessment of commercial motor vehicle driver distraction using naturalistic driving data. *Traffic Injury Prevention, 13*(6).

²"Driver Inspection", 49 C.F.R. § 396.13 (2011). Web.

³"Use of Seat Belts", C.F.R. § 392.16 (2011). Web.

⁴Bunn, T., Slavova, S., & Robertson, M. (2013). Motor vehicle injuries among semi truck drivers and sleeper berth passengers. *Journal of Safety Research, (44)*, 51–55.

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