

Preventing Lane Change Crashes

Lane change crashes can often be prevented if the truck driver recognizes the hazards that increase the risk of a crash and applies the right defensive driving techniques. Read the information below then ask yourself how you can improve your driving to prevent lane change crashes.

RECOGNIZE THE HAZARDS

ENVIRONMENT: Traffic, in general, makes it challenging to manage the space around the truck. Traffic congestion and work zones increase the risk. Adverse weather, including mud, ice, and snow, reduces visibility.

EQUIPMENT: Truck blind spots are a major factor in lane-change crashes. Vibration can cause mirrors to become misaligned, affecting visibility, while damaged or inoperable mirrors and turn signals create hazards.

PERSONAL BEHAVIORS: Frequent or abrupt lane changes increase the risk of a crash. Also, forcing the truck into another driver's lane or failing to use mirrors and turn signals when changing lanes can lead to a crash.

KNOW THE DEFENSE

STAY IN ONE LANE: Avoid



frequent lane changes by keeping in your lane as much as possible. When a lane change is necessary, make sure it is safe and legal to do so. Use the mirrors and the "lean and look" method to make sure the adjacent lane is clear. Activate turn signals in advance, then change lanes gradually.

KEEP PROPER DISTANCE:

Keep at least six seconds behind the vehicle in front and add more distance if additional hazards are present. This allows you to check the side mirrors and manage the space around the vehicle.

BE ATTENTIVE TO THE ROAD:

Make periodic, quick glances to mirrors, and then return your focus to the road ahead.

OBSERVE PROPER SPEED:

Drive 2-3 MPH slower than the speed of traffic, not to exceed the speed limit. This creates a natural gap and allows you to perceive hazards faster and react without making abrupt lane changes.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS:

Put away mobile devices and avoid other distractions. This allows you to focus on the driving and be ready to react to hazards such as a passenger vehicle or truck cutting in front of your truck.

VEHICLE INSPECTIONS:

Check side and fender-mounted mirrors before driving to ensure they are in proper working order and alignment. Pull over if the mirrors need adjusting. Repair inoperable equipment before leaving on a trip.