



Safety Tips

for independent truck drivers and owner-operators

Independent truck drivers and owner-operators make up a large portion of Canada's long-distance truck driving workforce. They are essentially a single-person business where the owner runs the day-to-day operations of the company. For many larger companies, subcontracting commercial trucking operations has its advantages. Owner-operators usually pay for their own truck and equipment. So by hiring them, a company can avoid some of the financial and legal responsibilities associated with hiring a worker. Because of this, owner-operators must be especially concerned with workplace health and safety.

Independent truck drivers and owner-operators often work alone. Like other commercial drivers, they share their workplace with the public and are responsible for delivering valuable commodities in costly tractor-trailers. For the most part, they do this in a largely unsupervised environment. With all this resting on their shoulders, safety training is vital, not only for them but also for those who share the road with them.

These safety tips for truck drivers cover safety on the road, around dock and shipping areas, and around the truck.

Safety on the road

Vehicle inspection

- During circle checks, be alert for hazards and traffic conditions.
- Familiarize yourself with the operation and care of auxiliary equipment.

Road emergencies

- Don't attempt repairs you are not authorized or trained to do.
- Set out the early warning devices in accordance with the laws that may apply.

Fire

Know what your fire extinguisher will do and what it won't do. Any need to use it will be sudden—there won't have time to learn how to operate it.

Cargo

Cargo sometimes needs attention on the road.

- Tie downs may be under extreme stress. Check them at reasonable intervals on the trip.
- Release chain tighteners with care. They may whip when released.
- Check the cargo for shifting. There is a risk of collapse with shifted cargo.
- Open trailer doors slowly. Be aware of shifted cargo leaning against the doors.

Pedestrians

A "grounded" trucker is a pedestrian. Be a good one. Obey pedestrian traffic rules. Cross highways at safe locations such as traffic lights and designated pedestrian crosswalks.

Cab

You live in your cab, so keep it clean. Ventilate it properly. Exhaust fumes contain carbon monoxide, which can affect your alertness and cause an accident. Large doses of carbon monoxide can cause death.

Roadside problems

- Never pick up riders.
- Know your company's policy about stopping to offer assistance. In extreme emergencies, you will have to use your judgement.