

Tips for Construction Truck Drivers

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Research has shown that drivers who text while driving are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than those who aren't texting
- Prepare Your Vehicle: Conduct a pre-trip inspection

Operating an over-the-road truck safely requires preparation, knowledge and skill. Preparing yourself and your vehicle is the key to a safe day.

Prepare Yourself

Research has shown that drivers who use their cell phones to text while driving are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than those who aren't texting. This same study concluded that for heavy vehicles or trucks, dialing a cell phone made the risk of crash or near-crash events 5.9 times higher than non-distracted driving¹. A recent study by Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety concluded that drivers who perform these tasks don't think they are as distracted from the actual driving task as they really are².

- Turn off your cell phone before leaving a parked position – avoid talking or texting when the vehicle is in motion.
- When using a GPS device, input navigation data only when parked.
- Always buckle up and wear your seat belt before releasing the brakes.
- Wear a hardhat and safety glasses whenever you get out of the truck, whether at the plant or a jobsite.
- Use safety glasses or face shield when cleaning or chipping dried materials.
- Use hearing protection when you are in noisy locations.
- Use gloves appropriate to the task.
- Wear footwear specified by your company policy. If no policy exists, wear footwear that provides support to your ankles.

When entering or exiting the cab, always face the vehicle. Visually check the condition of the steps, rungs, and hand grabs. Ice, snow, mud, rain, or debris can cause them to become slippery. Use the three-point technique to safely get in or out of the truck: two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand always in contact with the truck's climbing system. Do not carry anything that prevents you from grasping a handhold.

Never jump down from the cab or bed of the truck. Look at the ground condition as you reach the bottom step. Holes, depressions, rocks or ice that weren't noticeable from the cab may now be visible.



Stay in the cab during loading and unloading to avoid being struck by falling aggregate, concrete, materials or debris. If you get out, wear your hardhat and safety glasses, and stay out from under belts, chutes, and suspended loads.

Prepare Your Vehicle

Conduct a pre-trip inspection of the following items:

- Tires are properly inflated and in good condition
- All lights and signals work
- Chocks are properly stowed
- Safety reflective triangles are usable and secured
- All mirrors are properly adjusted and clean
- Steps, rungs and grab rails are clean
- Back up alarm works and is loud enough to be heard above the surrounding environment
- Service and emergency brakes are adjusted and working
- Steering system is tight and responsive. Report excessive play and hard operation of the steering to maintenance.

Handling Gates and Chutes

Mishandling gates or chutes can result in strains, sprains, pinched hands, crushed toes, or even amputations. An object's weight is certainly a concern but so is your ability to firmly hold a large, awkwardly-shaped component. When handling components or accessory devices:

- Keep hands clear of pinch points
- Grasp it firmly
- Hold the item as close to your body as possible
- Look at ground conditions to identify tripping hazards
- Set your feet firmly before lifting or pulling
- Lift or pull steadily and avoid quick jerky motions
- While carrying a load, turn your feet rather than twisting your body

Securing the Load

Secure and tarp loads before leaving the yard. Don't overfill the dump body. In addition to running overweight, the tarp system may not fit properly. Automatic tarp systems are preferred as they protect the load without exposing the driver to a fall hazard.

Materials on a flatbed should be secured to meet federal standards. See Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Cargo Securement Rules for more information. (<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/truck/vehicle/cs-policy.htm>).

References

1. Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, July 29, 2009 press release: <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2009/07/2009-571.html>
2. Horrey, William J; Lesch, Mary F; Garabet, Angela (2008), Assessing the Awareness of Performance Decrements in Distracted Drivers, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, Volume: 40:2, pp. 675-682.

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