



# DRIVER SAFETY LETTER

**NPTC**  
National Private Truck Council

**CENTERLINE**  
A TRUEBLUE COMPANY

## Maintaining Your Composure on the Roads

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As a professional driver, you work daily on poorly maintained and overcrowded roads and highways. You often encounter other motorists who lack common courtesy, are distracted, or are compromised in some other way.

These behaviors are a breeding ground for aggressive driving. According to the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, aggressive driving is defined as any unsafe driving behavior performed deliberately and with ill intention or disregard for safety. This includes speeding in heavy traffic, weaving in and out of traffic, cutting in front of another driver and then slowing down, changing lanes without signaling; blocking cars attempting to pass or change lanes; tailgating or flashing headlights; running red lights; using headlights or brakes to “punish” other drivers.

The American Transportation Research Institute reports the likelihood of a commercial motor vehicle being involved in a crash increases significantly when the driver has been convicted of one of these hazardous actions. For example, a driver with a reckless driving violation has a 114% greater likelihood of being involved in a crash. The likelihood of a crash increases by 46% if the driver has a violation for following too closely. A driver is 45% more likely to get into a crash if they have a speeding violation.

When you are confronted with an aggressive driver or road rage, how should you respond?

1. Be on the lookout for drivers exhibiting the characteristics of aggressive driving. Anticipating such behavior and being prepared in advance helps you deal with the frustrations of aggressive driving. You learn from your own mistakes and those of others.
2. Don't take the bait. It's far better to back off and avoid engaging with an aggressive driver. Escalating the situation likely will only lead to an increase in danger and potentially could turn violent.
3. Avoid gesturing, honking and even making eye contact with the other driver, as these behaviors often escalate an already dangerous situation.
4. Keep in mind that you are not the enforcer of etiquette or courtesy or safe driving on the road. There is no lesson that should or can be taught in these situations. Your job is to get your load delivered safely and to return home to your family safely.
5. Take a deep breath and relax. Try to focus your attention on something other than any anger and frustration and maintain your focus and composure.
6. Move on and let it go. Do not give the road rage incident power over your own emotions. You may even want to pull over and take a quick walk or get a snack to refocus your attention.
7. Look at the bigger picture and don't take their actions personally. Put yourself in their shoes. There may be reasons why the other driver is displaying the characteristics of aggressive driving. They may be distressed or aggressive because of something else that happened during their day. You won't correct their behavior, but remaining calm will help you give them the wide berth needed to ensure safe transit.
8. Don't take their actions personally. Keep in mind that their actions may be a mistake and that you are, more than likely, not the root of their anger or distress.

From a broader perspective, you can help avoid the dangers of aggressive driving by making the following practices part of your routine:

1. Allow ample time to get to your destination safely.
2. Commit to practicing safe driving techniques.
3. Don't use your vehicle to intimidate or gain an advantage.
4. Don't tailgate. Following too closely reduces a driver's visibility and reaction time.
5. Never attempt to pass a vehicle unless it is safe and there is plenty of time to do so safely.
6. Never make obscene gestures or use your horn out of anger.
7. Don't allow yourself to be provoked. If another driver is acting aggressively, ignore them.
8. Remember the three Bs: be courteous, be patient, be forgiving.
9. Buckle up. It's your last line of defense. Seat belts save lives.

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*The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and [Centerline Drivers](https://www.centerline.com), is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at [tmoores@nptc.org](mailto:tmoores@nptc.org) or (703)838-8898.*