

DRIVER SAFETY LETTER



NPTC
National Private Truck Council

CENTERLINE
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Work Zone Safety

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It's now daylight savings time throughout much of the country and we will be seeing more signs of spring. However, longer daylight hours and warmer weather pose a new set of driving challenges. One of those is an increased amount of road work to repair streets and highways.

Work zones present many hazards, such as lane shifts, sudden stops, uneven road surfaces, moving workers and equipment, and confused passenger vehicle drivers. As a result, more than 700 people die in highway work zone crashes every year. In 2019, 27% of fatal work zone crashes involved at least one large truck crashes—so it's vital to take work zone safety seriously.

As a truck driver, you need to be particularly careful while traveling through work zones. Not all highway users recognize that trucks have limited maneuverability and large blind spots, both of which make operating in these areas more challenging. Instead, they view your vehicle as a ticket to speed up and squeeze in front of you. This leads to large trucks being disproportionately involved in work zone crashes. So, what can you do to safely navigate these work zones?

1. **Get the right trip planning info.** Before setting out on the road, research your route. When possible, avoid work zones all together. Stay up to date on weather and road conditions, detours and mountainous routes in order to plan driving time. Be aware that non-commercial navigation systems and apps may not provide warning of height and weight limitations and other commercial vehicle restrictions.
2. **Drive defensively.** Be constantly vigilant to detect unexpected road conditions, distracted drivers and motorists who don't understand how commercial vehicles operate. Scan ahead about 15 seconds (a quarter mile on interstates, or 1-2 blocks in cities) for traffic issues, work zones and other dangers. Check mirrors every 8-10 seconds to be aware of vehicles entering your blind spots. Be aware that many passenger car drivers will attempt to cut in front of you at the last minute.
3. **Move to the open lane.** When approaching lane closures, move into the open lane as soon as possible. Be sure to pay close attention to vehicles around you, especially in your blind spot.
4. **Signal for safety.** Signal and brake to give other drivers plenty of time to notice your intent. Rear-end crashes are extremely common in work zones. Maintain extra space between your vehicle and the one in front of you at all times. If you must pull off the road, use flashers, reflective triangles and road flares to alert approaching drivers.
5. **Know when to slow.** Lane closures, traffic pattern shifts and reduced speeds are common in work zones. Make sure to slow down when entering a work zone and keep an eye out for road workers. Driving too fast for weather and road conditions or failing to slow down for curves or ramps create risks for spills and rollovers, as well as crashes.
6. **Maintain your vehicle.** Ensure pre-trip safety inspections are completed, particularly for tires and brakes. Your life depends on them. Make sure your load is well balanced and secure, as a shifting load can cause a rollover or loss of control. Secure loose materials or they may create road hazards.
7. **Buckle up.** Use your safety belt every time. Safety belts save lives and reduce injuries. In 2014, 30% of truck drivers involved in fatal crashes were partially or totally ejected from their vehicles. Wearing a seat belt allows drivers to stay inside and in control of their vehicles in case of a crash.
8. **Stay sharp.** Make sure you are getting enough rest. Don't drive when you're fatigued, too ill to focus or on medications (including over-the-counter medicine) that make you drowsy or dizzy.
9. **Never drive distracted.** You should always keep your eyes on the road, but this is exceptionally important in work zones. Be aware of all signage throughout work zones indicating reduced speeds, lane changes and other important information. Avoid distractions such as your cellphone, eating, drinking, the radio, GPS and conversing with other passengers.

The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and [Centerline Drivers](#), 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 tmoore@nptc.org or (703)838-8898.