



## Navigating the Holidays

November 2024

Next week, as we pause to give thanks and celebrate Thanksgiving, we officially welcome in the holiday season. As the song says, “It’s the most wonderful time of the year,” unless you are driving a commercial vehicle! In most areas, the decorations are already up – signaling additional traffic challenges that will test our patience and require more attention and focus as we go about our daily routines.

The most immediate concern will be the likelihood that more motorists sharing the roadways with you will have been drinking. Second, you can count on more traffic and congestion, particularly around shopping centers, schools and other urban centers. In addition, more of the motorists will be in a hurry, distracted or not paying full time and attention to their driving. Third, many drivers will be on the road driving “over the river and through the woods,” to visit friends and relatives. And many of these drivers will be fatigued, distracted or unfamiliar with local driving conditions. Fourth, we are approaching the shortest days of the year measured in actual sunlight. Not to mention the weather, in most parts of the country, will likely present its own set of challenges.

So, what’s the best way to handle these challenges?

- Start each trip with an extra dose of patience, understanding that you will likely encounter frustrations.
- Make sure you focus on your job by clearing your head of distractions.
- Plan the best route and check for traffic and weather-related updates. Factor in additional travel time if driving through congested areas or inclement weather.
- Ensure that your truck is in good working order by conducting a thorough pre-trip inspection. It’s important that we can see other motorists, that we can stop on time, and that we don’t add to the congestion by breaking down.
- Always buckle up.
- Anticipate erratic behavior, remain vigilant, and leave yourself an out
- Do your part to remove as many distractions as you can (e.g. food, phones, maps, papers, etc.)

Most of us understand the risks are high while on the roadway, but the challenge is to recognize that risks remain high once we are off the roadway. Too often, many drivers drop their guard and become less vigilant once they turn off the street and into a parking lot.

Remember most passenger car drivers are usually focused on seeking a parking spot. They are not on the look-out for other drivers or objects. Many of these drivers roll through stop signs, travel against the directional arrows, or cut between parked cars. Vehicles can be coming from any direction...at any time. Here are some tips to keep your guard up:

- Establish eye contact. Watch for children and the elderly.
- To the degree possible, avoid backing. Look for a “pull-through” spot that will negate the need to back out. When you are not sure what is around you, get out and look.
- Obey all traffic signs and directional arrows.
- Drive slowly and use your turn signals and headlights – make sure your vehicle is seen and watch for distracted motorists who do not see you coming.
- Slow down for speed bumps so as not to injure yourself or damage your cargo.
- Be extra careful at entrances and exits – motorists are more likely to stop suddenly and for no apparent reason.
- Be especially careful in lots that contain Post Offices, package stores and other locations where people are prone to dart in and out hastily in a hurry to be on their way.

Keep these driving tips in mind to make sure you have much to give thanks for this holiday season!

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*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](mailto:tmoore@nptc.org) or (703)838-8898.*