

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH (January 2019)

Driving Too fast for Conditions

As a professional truck driver, you will need to remember a lot. One of those things is driving the proper speed for current conditions. There are many factors that can tell a driver they need to slow down and adjust their driving. As we look at "Driving too Fast for Conditions" we will examine a few scenarios to help you remember this.

Firstly, what conditions can exist that one might want to slow down or adjust their driving for? Well, heavy traffic is one. How many times have you seen a driver weaving in and out of lanes, driving like they are part of the NASCAR circuit in heavy traffic? We all have, we all know those people are dangerous and they make us nervous. The fact is, no one needs to be anywhere so badly that it justifies the need to drive unsafely.

Having said this, you can now begin to realize all of the situations in which a driver faces a need to adjust their driving. I will admit that it is a rarer event that this happens in heavier traffic with a semi-truck; unless the truck driver is driving in an inattentive manner. But there are a lot of other situations in which your driving will need to be adjusted.

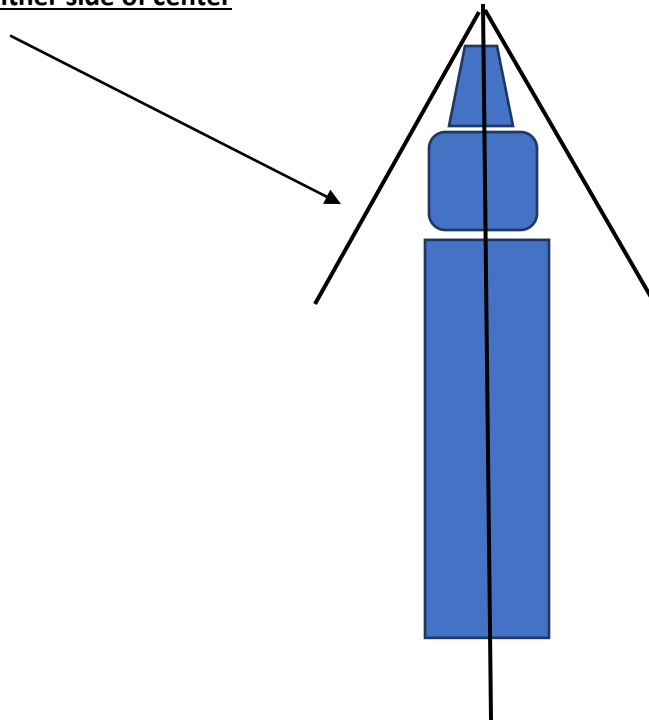
In article one we spoke about speed in curves. This is exactly a situation in which you will need to slow down and drive for that condition. Remember, if a semi-truck enters a curve going too fast, the truck can rollover or leave the roadway. A semi-truck has a very high center of gravity and all curves and highway ramps will need to be navigated under the posted speed limit (posted speed limits are for cars on curves, not trucks) for the curve to prevent a catastrophic event.

Another time to adjust speed and slow down for conditions is in adverse driving conditions. One of those conditions is on snow and ice. Failing to slow down on snow and ice can cause your truck to jackknife. A jackknife is one of the scariest experiences a driver can have. You hopefully have no idea what it can feel like driving a semi-truck that you lose control of and are now simply along for the ride, a very frightening ride. If this happens, pray that there are no other vehicles near or around you, if there are, they can become innocent victims of loss of control incident. After your out of control truck comes to a stop, you will usually be in the median of the highway or off to the side. You may hit other things when your truck leaves the roadway; such as trees, utility poles or even fencing. These tertiary hits can cause further damage (often severe) and further injury.

If you are experiencing adverse conditions, your instinct should be to slow down automatically. If there are adverse driving conditions, there are signs that will tell you the road conditions have changed. One is your gauges; if your speedometer shows you at a constant speed but your tachometer is jumping and your RPM's are increasing, your tires probably have lost traction. This can happen on snow, ice or rain. You are now in danger of possibly being thrust into a jackknife situation. You will need to restore rolling traction to your tires quickly. The first thing you will need to do is get off the accelerator pedal and if you are driving a manual transmission truck, then depress the clutch. This will cut all the power to the drive wheels and slow you down quicker and more safely. If you are in an automatic, the sensors should adjust to provide the same outcome as depressing the clutch, however, sensors can go out. If they do or it is not responding as it should, then pop the transmission into neutral. As the vehicle slows, the wheels should come back to getting rolling traction. This will allow you to get out of the jackknife, but only if

you catch it in time. There is a point of no return if a vehicle is going into a jackknife. That point is when the trailer goes beyond a limit of 15 degrees from either side of center. See below: A top view of a semi-truck.

15 degrees either side of center



So, pay attention at all times and especially if driving in adverse conditions. Always adjust your driving for the condition you are in. Points to remember are, always slow down for the following:

- Snow, Ice, Rain, Sleet
- Fog or steam/smoke crossing a roadway (often from a factory or mill)
- Heavy Traffic conditions
- Construction Zones
- Unfamiliar roads
- Two lane roads.
- Winding Roads.
- High Winds.

Be attentive at all times, know what is happening around your vehicle and adjust your driving. There is never a proper time to operate your vehicle in an unsafe manner. We can reschedule an appointment, but we cannot bring you back to life.