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TEXAS

SAFETY COACH CARDS

TRUCK MINI-DECK



COV01

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Save a Life™
Texas Department of Transportation

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These **Truck Safety Coach** cards can be used in or out of the office setting.

Cards feature discussion points and questions with suggested answers.

Developed with input from the Texas Trucking Association.

TXTA
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OUR DRIVING CONCERN

TEXAS EMPLOYER TRAFFIC SAFETY PROGRAM

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If you love these free Safety Coach Cards, there are many more **FREE resources** your company can use to train employees and reduce costs!

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Who should be using a truck driver's side-view mirror, besides the driver of the truck?



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ANSWER: YOU!

If you can't see the driver in the truck's side mirror, you are following too close. The driver can't see you or your vehicle. It also obscures your view of the road in front of you. **Avoid traveling alongside or close behind a truck**.

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What do a **truck** and **Mother Nature** have in common?



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ANSWER: Both can create **WIND**!

Because of their size, **large trucks create wind currents** that can affect nearby vehicles. These currents can **threaten your vehicle's stability** when you are close. This is an even greater driving challenge when you are riding a motorcycle, towing a trailer or other object, or traveling on slick roadways. **Be sure to allow plenty of clearance between your vehicle and large trucks.**

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- ✓ Considering the average car weighs about 5,000 pounds, what do you think is the legal weight limit for a semi-truck?
- ✓ How does **vehicle weight affect traffic**?

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ANSWER: Large trucks and truck-tractor combinations can weigh as much as 80,000 pounds. (**That's 40 tons.**)

- ✓ Because of this, they require more acceleration and deceleration time than an average passenger vehicle and can have blind spots in multiple locations.
- ✓ Always take extra care to share the road responsibly with large trucks!

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Trucks, at least, need additional space because **they take twice as long to stop as a passenger car**. If you move into that space and brake suddenly, the truck may not have enough time to stop safely.

✓ **How can you tell** if you have enough room to pass a truck safely?

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ANSWER:

- ✓ Always leave at least four car lengths between the back of your car and the front of any large truck you pass (more if driving in adverse conditions).
- ✓ Make sure the entire truck appears in your rearview mirror before returning to the lane.
- ✓ Never cut in front of a truck.

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Why can **a crash with a truck** be more severe than a crash with a smaller vehicle?

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ANSWER:

Large trucks and the trailers they pull **do not** have impact-absorbing bumpers.

Additionally, the **truck's metal bumpers may not align with those of your car**. A severe collision can result when a car hits the rear end of a truck.

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How many **blind spots** does a large truck have?



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ANSWER: 4

- ✓ There are **four large blind spots** where cars disappear from a truck driver's view. They extend far beyond the right and left lanes as well as the rear and front of the truck.
- ✓ These "**No Zones**" are danger areas around large trucks in which crashes are more likely to occur. If the passenger car can't see the truck's mirrors, the trucker can't see car.
- ✓ Passenger car drivers should avoid lingering in these areas whenever possible. Stay out of the "**No Zone**"!

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What is "**bobtailing**?"

- ✓ Are "bobtailing" trucks safer to be around on the road than trucks hauling trailers?

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ANSWER:

- ✓ **Bobtailing** is a term used when a truck is driving without the trailer attached.
- ✓ Trucks handle very differently when bobtailing, often times giving them less tractions, especially in wet weather.
- ✓ Whether or not a truck is hauling a trailer, always **use caution when driving near big rigs**.

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What's the proper way for **trucks** to proceed across a **rail grade crossing**?



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- ✓ Approach with care; warn others you are slowing.
- ✓ Use pull-out lane if available.
- ✓ Prepare to stop—roll down windows and turn off noise.
- ✓ Stop at least 15’ but not more than 50’ from nearest rail.
- ✓ Look and listen both ways carefully, and bend forward to see around mirrors and A-pillars.
- ✓ Make sure you can drive fully through, and the back of your vehicle will have at least 3’ of clearance from furthest rail.
- ✓ If in a pull-out lane: signal, watch for safe gap, re-enter road.
- ✓ Use highest gear that will let you cross without shifting.
- ✓ Keep going once you start even if crossing lights start to flash.

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Why is it dangerous driving on the **side of a commercial motor vehicle** (CMV)?



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ANSWER: Driving on the **side of a CMV** is **dangerous** because:

- ✓ Commercial motor vehicles have large **"No-Zone" blind spots** on either side where the CMV driver cannot see other vehicles.
- ✓ You have an increased risk of a **lane change collision**.
- ✓ The blind spot may **extend across multiple lanes of traffic** if you are on the right side of a CMV.

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Why do commercial motor vehicles (CMV) **require more distance to stop** than passenger vehicles?



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ANSWER:

- ✓ CMVs require **significantly more stopping distance** due to their size and weight—especially when fully loaded.
- ✓ When driving at highway speeds CMVs require even more distance—**up to 650 feet or one and a half football fields**.

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When **merging in front of a truck**, how much of the truck should be visible in your rearview mirror?



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The **ENTIRE front of the truck** should be visible in your rear-view mirror before merging in front of it.

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Why should drivers **avoid cutting off** a commercial motor vehicle?



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ANSWER:

- ✓ Trucks may **not be able to stop quickly enough** to avoid a crash.
- ✓ Trucks may have to take **evasive actions** to avoid a rear-end crash that instead cause another crash.

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Why is **tailgating** especially dangerous behind a commercial motor vehicle (CMV)?



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Tailgating behind a CMV:

- ✓ **Limits your visibility** ahead
- ✓ Leaves **little time to react** if the truck stops suddenly
- ✓ Puts you in the **danger zone if the truck blows a tire**. (Truck tires can weigh 100 pounds or more!)
- ✓ Puts you within the **truck's largest blind spot**—within 150 feet of the back of a trailer.

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What should motorists expect when a **truck is making a right turn**?



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ANSWER:

- ✓ Trucks may **swing left** before turning right.
- ✓ The trailer will take a much **shorter path** to turn than the truck does.
- ✓ Drivers should never squeeze between the truck and the curb.

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Why can **sudden lane changes** around trucks create serious crash risks?



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Large trucks cannot **maneuver or react as quickly as passenger vehicles**, making sudden moves hazardous.

If a truck is forced to change lanes quickly it can cause the trailer to slide sideways and start pushing the truck across all lanes of traffic.

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What is the **safest action** when approaching a stopped commercial motor vehicle (CMV) on the **shoulder of the road**?



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If you approach a stopped CMV on the shoulder of the road:

- ✓ **Slow down!**
- ✓ When you can do so safely and legally—**move over**.
- ✓ **Provide extra space** for the driver and emergency personnel.

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Why is **driving while distracted** around trucks particularly dangerous?



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- ✓ Trucks are **large** and move **slowly** to stop or maneuver.
- ✓ Distracted drivers have **less time to react** safely.

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What should drivers do when traveling near a truck in **bad weather** or **heavy winds**?



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During bad weather or heavy winds, drivers should:

- ✓ Increase following distance
- ✓ Avoid driving beside the truck too long
- ✓ Be prepared for wind turbulence or spray
- ✓ Use lights and wipers, as appropriate
- ✓ Pull over if conditions become unsafe

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Why is performing a thorough **pre-trip inspection** especially important for a commercial motor vehicle driver?



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A correct pre-trip inspection helps **identify mechanical or safety defects** before operating the vehicle—reducing the risk of crashes and violations.

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What is the **most important** thing a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver can do to **prevent crashes**?



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A CMV driver should maintain **FULL ATTENTION** on driving by eliminating distractions and constantly scanning the roadway ahead and behind.

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What should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver do **before changing lanes**?



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Prior to changing lanes, a CMV driver should:

- ✓ Check mirrors
- ✓ Signal early
- ✓ Check blind spots
- ✓ Make lane changes slowly and safely

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Why is **speed management** important for commercial motor vehicles?



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ANSWER:

Excessive speed:

- ✓ Reduces reaction time
- ✓ Increases stopping distance
- ✓ Raises the severity of crashes

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What should commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers do when **driving in adverse weather** conditions?



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During adverse weather conditions, a CMV driver should:

- ✓ Slow down
- ✓ Increase following distance
- ✓ Use headlights correctly
- ✓ Stop operating if conditions become unsafe
- ✓ Pay close attention to other vehicles that may not be adjusting for the conditions

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Why is **cargo securement** important on a commercial motor vehicle?



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Incorrectly secured cargo can **shift**, affect **vehicle stability** or **fall onto the roadway** causing serious crashes.

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What is the purpose of commercial motor vehicle **hours-of-service regulations**?



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Commercial motor vehicle hours-of-service rules are designed to **reduce driver fatigue** and help **prevent fatigue-related crashes**.

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How can commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers safely **manage fatigue**?



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A CMV driver should:

- ✓ Get the correct amount of rest
- ✓ Recognize signs of drowsiness
- ✓ Follow hours-of-service limits
- ✓ **NEVER drive while fatigued**

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Why is **space management** important around a commercial motor vehicle (CMV)?



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Maintaining a **safety cushion** around the vehicle gives the CMV drivers more time to react to hazards and avoid crashes.



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What should commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers do when approaching **work zones** or **stopped traffic**?



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In work zones or stopped traffic, CMV drivers should:

- ✓ Slow down early
- ✓ Stay alert
- ✓ Avoid distractions
- ✓ Be prepared for sudden traffic changes

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Why is **communication** important between commercial motor vehicle drivers and other motorists?



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ANSWER:

Correct use of turn signals, brake lights and safe driving behavior helps other road users **anticipate actions** and **avoid crashes**.

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What should you look for **underneath** a parked commercial motor vehicle (CMV) during a **pre-trip walk-around**?



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A CMV driver should look underneath for:

- ✓ Fluid leaks
- ✓ Hanging parts
- ✓ Damaged components
- ✓ Loose lines

Leaks or hanging equipment can signal a **mechanical problem** that needs attention before the trip begins.

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What should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver do if a **warning light** stays on after starting the vehicle?



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The CMV driver should:

- ✓ Check the issue
- ✓ Report it
- ✓ Follow company procedure for next steps

Warning lights are alerts, not inconveniences. Investigate and report them before driving, especially when they involve brakes, tires, engine systems or other safety equipment.

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Why should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver **test lights** and **turn signals** before leaving?



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ANSWER:

Lights and turn signals are part of a pre-trip inspection.

This allows the driver of a CMV to ensure they can communicate they are stopping, turning or making a lane change.

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What should a commercial motor vehicle driver do if **cargo has shifted** during a trip?



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If cargo has shifted:

- ✓ Find a safe place to stop
- ✓ Inspect
- ✓ Re-secure or adjust the load
- ✓ Report if needed
- ✓ Be sure to follow company procedures, as necessary

Cargo must be properly distributed and secured so it cannot shift or fall from the vehicle.

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Typically, when should **cargo be inspected** for a commercial motor vehicle?



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Cargo is typically inspected on a regular basis, including:

- ✓ Pre-trip
- ✓ Within the first 50 miles
- ✓ At duty-status changes
- ✓ After 3 hours, or after 150 miles—whichever comes first

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What should a commercial motor vehicle driver do before **backing into an unfamiliar area**?



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Before backing up:

- ✓ Get out and look
- ✓ Check clearance
- ✓ Identify hazards
- ✓ Use a spotter if available

A walk-around before backing helps identify people, vehicles, fixed objects, overhead hazards and blind spots that may not be visible from the cab.

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Why should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver **avoid relying only on mirrors** while changing lanes?



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Mirrors are essential, but **large vehicles have significant blind spots**. A CMV driver should:

- ✓ Check mirrors
- ✓ Signal early
- ✓ Look and scan the entire roadway
- ✓ Verify the lane is clear

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What is **the safest way to pass** a tractor-trailer or truck on the highway?



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ANSWER:

- ✓ When clear, **pass quickly** and safely on the **LEFT side**.
- ✓ **Avoid lingering** beside the tractor-trailer or truck.
- ✓ Maintain a **steady speed**.
- ✓ Merge back in front of the tractor-trailer or truck when you see the **whole front of the vehicle** in your rear-view mirror.

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What are some of the signs a commercial motor vehicle has an **air-brake** or a **brake-system problem**?



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Examples of an air-brake or brake-system problem include:

- ✓ Low-air warning
- ✓ Air leak
- ✓ Poor brake response
- ✓ Warning light
- ✓ Unusual brake pull

Brakes are a critical safety system. A warning light, air leak, abnormal response or other concern requires immediate attention. Follow company procedures for next steps.

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What should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver do if the **mirrors** are dirty, cracked or incorrectly adjusted?



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Before operating a CMV, the driver should:

- ✓ Clean mirrors
- ✓ Adjust mirrors
- ✓ Report and/or repair mirrors if visibility is affected

Mirrors are essential for checking traffic, lane position and blind spots. Start a trip only when mirrors are clear and usable to view around the vehicle.

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What should a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver inspect on **tires** and **wheels**?



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A CMV pre-trip inspection of tires and wheels should include checking:

- ✓ Tire pressure
- ✓ Tread
- ✓ Cuts
- ✓ Bulges
- ✓ Exposed cords
- ✓ Wheel/rim damage
- ✓ Loose lug nuts

Tires and wheels affect steering, braking and vehicle stability. Low pressure, visible damage or wheel problems can lead to a serious road failure.

TR40