



Sharing the Road with Commercial Vehicles

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Tractor trailers, heavy trucks, tankers and other commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) have become a common feature of America's vast road network. Whether it be a large, urban metropolis, a medium-sized city or a small, rural community, many of the goods and essential items brought to our stores and our doors probably arrive in a large truck. This means that wherever you drive, you are almost guaranteed to be sharing the road with these vehicles.

As an employer, this can be cause for concern. The much greater size and mass of large trucks combined with highway speeds and risks like distraction have profound implications for crashes. A collision with a large truck is more likely to result in serious injuries and fatalities and even the most skilled drivers cannot evade the laws of physics.

Vehicle collisions are a leading factor in employee absenteeism and the direct and indirect costs of crashes for companies can be substantial. A recent report from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety **showed employer costs for road crashes in the US have risen dramatically in the last decade** and were estimated to be \$72.2 billion in direct costs for crashes such as medical care, legal liability,

property damage and lost productivity in 2019. Even more concerning was that employer costs associated with distracted driving crashes were estimated at \$18.8 billion; more than speeding (\$9.8 billion) and alcohol (\$8 billion) combined.

And this phenomenon is not new. Transportation-related incidents were reported to account for 41% of workplace fatalities in the United States in 2015 (Lundin 2017), and in 2020, more than one in five (22% or 1,038) US workers killed in a work-related death were driving or riding in a motor vehicle on a public road (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2022).

This concern among employers has grown in the past decade in light of the well-documented risks posed by distracted driving on our roads (Klauer et al., 2006;

Dingus et al., 2016; Gershon et al., 2017), and recent reports underscoring the **prevalence of this problem** (Robertson et al., 2023; Blincoe et al., 2023).

Employers can play a critical role in protecting employees by adopting road safety initiatives as an essential component of workplace safety strategies. This means not only creating workplace policies to increase awareness about safe practices to share the road with large vehicles and to prevent distractions, but also providing training and education to help all employees navigate roadways shared with large trucks and avoid distractions behind the wheel.

Many trucking companies have already adopted this approach by investing in enhancements to driver training and coaching tools and implementing distracted driving policies in the workplace. But it is equally important that employers in other industries follow suit to help accelerate progress in reducing road crashes. Many diverse sectors either rely on a fleet of company vehicles used by employees to travel to different clients and job sites, or they reimburse employees for mileage using their own vehicle. Either way this means that, for many employees, the road can be their workplace, or at least where they spend a large portion of their working hours. Even among companies whose workers simply commute daily to and from the workplace, these employees are often driving in rush hour traffic during peak periods, twice a day, five days a week. This can add up to a lot of risk. Research shows non-commercial drivers in field sales positions or other employees who drive for service calls, meetings, events and job-related errands are similarly exposed to crash risks as commercial drivers. In a U.S. study which matched work-related fatal crash data in 2010 from the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) with that of the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), it was determined that 51% of these victims were in transportation and material moving operations (Byler et al. 2016).

The bottom line is that knowing how to share the road with commercial motor vehicles (CMV) and avoid distractions is important for all road users. A wide variety of resources are available to help employers educate road users. The tools cover important topics like identifying and avoiding blind spots; understanding how the mass and height of CMVs influence things like headway between other vehicles; sightlines; braking distances; and, the heightened dangers of inattention or distraction

around CMVs. These resources are also available in different formats, including online learning materials, educational videos, and even hands-on experiences with CMV drivers and tractor-trailers.

Just a few examples of these program resources are described below, and employers are encouraged to check them out and consider using them to get started in their own workplace. In addition, many similar programs may be organized at the state or local level. Local law enforcement, trucking companies, state trucking associations, or transportation departments may be able to help connect you to local resources.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

The **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)** has been promoting share the road education for 20 years. Their mission is to improve CMV safety on America's roadways and they offer a variety of resources for share the road education. FMCSA's Our Roads, Our Safety® program offers materials and videos that can be integrated into driver education or employee training programs. FMCSA also works with their local and regional offices to conduct site visits and provide hands-on education with tractor trailers.

For more information please visit FMCSA's **Our Roads, Our Safety®** website or or contact **OurRoads@dot.gov**. FMCSA can help direct you to the best resources for your program's needs, as well as connect you to the appropriate regional or local offices for more information.

American Trucking Associations

The **American Trucking Associations (ATA)** is a federation which represents more than 30,000 fleets and stakeholders in the trucking industry. In 1986, ATA created their Share the Road Program to help educate the public about driving safely around commercial vehicles. ATA's Share the Road Program is comprised of million-mile accident-free commercial vehicle drivers who travel the country leading safety education and outreach for sharing the road with CMVs.

ATA's Share the Road website hosts online driving tips that can be incorporated into education or training programs, and their Share the Road Team visits schools, driver education classes, and other community events. For more information about scheduling an event with the road team please visit

ATA's [Share the Road](#) website or contact [ATA](#) for more information.

Virginia Tech Transportation Institute

The [Virginia Tech Transportation Institute \(VTTI\)](#), with support from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the National Safety Council, the Delaware Department of Transportation, the Virginia State Police, and the Delaware State Police, has also implemented a Share the Road program. To date, the program has reached over 20,000 students. VTTI's researchers work with local partner fleets to bring trucks and educators to high schools and community events throughout the U.S. The program is targeted at teen driver education programs and includes both classroom and hands-on learning modules for students. The program grew out of research showing light vehicle drivers initiated more than 75% of incidents involving heavy trucks that were – in part – due to a lack of driver education.

For more information about the program, the materials that are available, and site visits go to VTTI's [Sharing the Road with Large Trucks](#) or [email](#) them for more information.

State Trucking Associations

The ATA federation includes 50 state trucking associations which are the voice of the trucking industry in state capitals. They are knowledgeable about the unique safety challenges that trucking faces within their respective states. Individual state trucking associations may have their own share the road programs or educational materials which can provide additional context for local safety challenges, as well as local partners who can assist with the education. Examples of state trucking association programs are provided below, for more information please contact your local association(s) for more information.

- [Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association Road Team](#)
- [Florida Trucking Association Road Team](#)
- [Minnesota Trucking Association Share the Road](#)
- [Trucking Association of New York Street Smarts Program](#)

Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance

The [Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance \(CVSA\)](#) is an alliance of local, state, provincial, territorial and federal commercial motor vehicle safety officials

and industry representatives within the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. CVSA's Operation Safe Driver program provides outreach and educational materials for training commercial vehicle drivers. These materials can also provide important context for the general public to learn about the challenges of safely operating an 80,000lb vehicle. Commercial vehicle drivers must be aware of the stopping distances, unique dynamics, and blind spots of the vehicles they operate, and other motorists should be aware that this may lead a safe CMV driver to operate their vehicle differently from passenger vehicles.

CVSA can also be a resource for connecting to state or local law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement can be an excellent resource for CMV safety, though the best ways to engage with them will vary greatly by jurisdiction. For more information on how to engage with law enforcement on safe driving visit [CVSA's Operation Safe Driver Program](#) or contact [Jake Elovirta](#), CVSA's Director of Enforcement Programs.

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The **National Distracted Driving Coalition (NDDC)** was formed in March 2021 to address distracted driving, which is a contributing factor to road deaths and injuries. This road safety issue is a priority concern shared by many organizations across many sectors. A diverse cross-section of entities, representing academia, non-profits, government, advocacy, and industries, including insurance, transportation, automotive and technology, have come together to create a National Action Plan to tackle this important issue.

Disclaimer

The National Distracted Driving Coalition (NDDC), formed by the National Transportation Safety Board, is composed of diverse members and stakeholders representing a variety of organizations, including non-profits, industries, governments and communities. The diversity of views and opinions is a key feature of the NDDC designed to encourage the development of innovative approaches to preventing distracted driving. This strategy enables the NDDC to explore multiple tactics to reduce distracted driving crashes. In light of this diversity, it is unlikely consensus can be achieved across all organizations with respect to materials produced. NDDC participation does not suggest all organizations necessarily agree with, or support, NDDC proposals, recommendations, or educational materials, and it would be improper to impute any one organization's agreement with, or support for, NDDC proposals, recommendations or materials solely on the basis of

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