

NEW DRIVERS

USE PRECAUTION AROUND A TRUCK'S NO-ZONE AREA

KELLY MANNING: Welcome to DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Kelly Manning, Infocast Editor.

Today we are here with Inspector **Glenn Terlecki** of the Department of Motor Vehicles Truck Squad Unit within the Commercial Vehicle Safety Division. He is going to explain to us how we can safely share the road with large vehicles such as trucks, tractor trailers, buses and RVs.

KELLY MANNING: Inspector Terlecki, can you begin by explaining what the no-zone is?

GLENN TERLECKI: Yes. In 1991 Congress directed the Federal Highway Administration, now under the direction of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, to educate the driving public on how to safely share the road with large trucks and buses. In response, the no-zone or share the road program was introduced in 1994. The no-zone represents the danger areas around trucks and buses where crashes are most likely to occur. Some no-zones are actually blind spots or areas around trucks and buses where your car actually disappears from the view of the drivers. The blind spots are the side no-zone, the rear no-zone and the front no-zone areas.

KELLY: Would you mind describing each no-zone starting with the sides?

GLENN: Trucks and buses have large blind spots on both sides. They're much larger than the blind spots of your car. The right blind side is actually more dangerous because trucks and buses make wide right turns. If you can't see the driver's face in the sideview mirrors, that driver can't see you.

KELLY: What about the front no-zone?

GLENN: In the front no-zone, if a car cuts in or brakes suddenly while traveling directly in the path of a truck or bus, this could cause a serious accident or even a fatal accident.

Trucks and buses take much longer to stop in comparison to cars, and depending on a certain weather or road conditions, braking ability can be diminished even more.

KELLY: And lastly, can you explain the no-zone in the rear of the vehicle?

GLENN: With the rear no-zone, unlike cars, trucks and buses also have huge blind spots directly behind them. If you are following too close behind a truck, that driver can't see you and you can't see what's going on ahead of you. If that driver breaks suddenly, you could end up running right into them.

KELLY: What tips can you provide new drivers on how to pass trucks safely?

GLENN: When you decide to pass a large truck, remember that it takes much longer and requires much more space than passing a car. Look at the road that you're traveling on. If there's hills or curves, that could influence the speed of both the truck and the car. Pass when you have a clear view of the road ahead of you. You have to maintain a consistent speed. And when you pull in front of that truck, only do so after seeing both headlights in your rear view mirror.

KELLY: Because truck drivers have so many blind spots, would you recommend that we leave a larger following distance or space cushion on the sides than we would on passenger vehicles?

GLENN: Absolutely. It's estimated that over 200,000 crashes between trucks and cars take place each year. Statistics show that the cause of over 60% of the fatal accidents between cars and trucks is found to rest with the driver of the car. And these stats also show that four of every five times, the driver of the car is usually the one who is killed. If you allow a greater following distance and avoid blind spots, you can avoid a potentially dangerous situation.

KELLY: When driving by a truck on local roads, I notice that they make very wide turns. What should a driver do when they approach a truck that is turning?

GLENN: It's not easy to operate a 22-foot tractor and a 48-foot trailer around city and town roads. Truck drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely

negotiate a right hand turn properly. So pay attention to truck signals and leave them plenty of room to maneuver.

KELLY: What should a driver do if they approach a truck that is in reverse on the roadways and backing into a driveway?

GLENN: People don't always understand that it takes time and concentration to back a large tractor trailer up without hitting anything. It may take several attempts for the truck to reverse into a tight driveway. So keep your cool. Let the truck driver do his job.

KELLY: Is there any other advice you can give students who are learning how to drive for the first time on how to safely share the road with trucks?

GLENN: Well, trucks are responsible for carrying nearly 30% of all cargo shipped in the United States. There are a lot of these vehicles out on the road. So my advice to a new driver is to always pay attention to the cars, trucks and buses around you. Watch out for the blind spots on these vehicles. Be patient. Don't drive aggressively. And as always, always wear your seatbelt.

KELLY: Well, thank you very much, Inspector Terlecki, for being with us here today. It is very important for new drivers to learn how to share the road with others, especially large trucks.

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