

Best Practice Guide

Truck - Long Distance



Go The Extra Mile

As a long distance truck driver you will be required to drive your vehicle for long hours, day in and day out.

Your level of risk on the road is high due to the amount of time you spend in your vehicle and the long hours you spend on monotonous roads. For this reason it is vital that you take safety seriously and take all the steps you can to be a responsible and safe driver.

There are a number of precautions you should take before getting into your vehicle and while on the road to help cut your chances of a collision.

Plan Your Route

Wherever possible, study your route before setting off to avoid the temptation of taking a quick glance at a map while driving. If you plan on using a satellite navigation system always program this before beginning your journey so that you do not need to operate it while in control of your vehicle.

Watch For Tiredness

As a long distance driver you are likely to spend a lot of time driving on motorways. These roads can be monotonous and can cause some drivers to temporarily 'switch off'.

To help avoid sleepiness while driving:

- Never drive when you are feeling tired.
- Avoid driving when you feel unwell, especially if you are taking any medication which could cause drowsiness.
- Take a 15-minute break at least every two hours. Plan ahead if possible so you can take breaks in locations where it is safe to step out of your vehicle to stretch your legs and get some fresh air
- If you begin to feel tired pull off the motorway at the next opportunity even if you are not due a break.

Keep A Safe Distance

Rear-end collisions caused by drivers failing to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front are the most common crashes on motorways.

Always follow the two second rule:

- Watch for the vehicle in front passing a roadside object.
- Begin saying, 'Only a fool breaks the two-second rule'.
- If you reach the object before you finish speaking, you are too close.

Read The Road

Read the road ahead for clues. To do this, look for vehicles using their:

- Brake lights - which indicate they will be slowing down.
- Indicators - which indicate they will be changing lanes.
- Hazard lights - which warn they may be stopping suddenly or there may be an incident ahead.

Also look for warning signs which can alert you to hazards such as lane closures, collisions and debris in the road.

Watch Your Attitude

Your behaviour is reflected in the way you respond to other drivers.

Examples of bad behaviour include:

- Beeping your horn unnecessarily.
- Shouting at others.
- Using rude gestures.
- Getting impatient with other, more cautious, drivers.

A driver with safe behaviour knows that everyone has the same right to use the road and is tolerant of all other drivers.

Turn Your Phone Off

Never be tempted to use your mobile phone as 'something to do' on a long journey. If you drive while using a mobile phone, regardless of whether it is hand-held or hands-free.

You are more likely than other drivers to:

- Be less aware of what is happening around you.
- Fail to see road signs.
- Fail to maintain a steady speed.
- React more slowly and take longer to brake.
- Enter unsafe gaps in traffic.
- Feel stressed and frustrated.

Avoid Distractions

Because you spend a lot of time in your vehicle, you are likely to feel comfortable in it and be tempted to take on additional tasks. However, any distraction while driving could reduce your ability to identify a potential hazard.

This includes:

- Loud music.
- Changing the radio station / CD.
- Using a satellite navigation system.
- Any other kind of multi-tasking.

Check Your Vehicle

People who drive for work should check their vehicle every day.

Check:

- Tyres for any obvious signs of wear / damage.
- That brakes are working before setting off by accelerating gently then pressing the brake pedal (only if you are in a safe place such as a driveway).
- Lights by turning them on then getting out of your vehicle to check they are working. Alternatively you can position your vehicle in front of a garage door or other light surface and tests the lights against this. You can also check brake lights this way.
- That wipers are working before setting off and also check that you have fluid in your wash wipe.

Consider Your Comfort

It is important that you are comfortable in your vehicle, especially when making long journeys.

Make sure you:

- Adjust your seat so your feet can reach the pedals comfortably without stretching, you can reach all controls comfortably and have clear vision all around.
- Sit up straight.
- Adjust mirrors so you can use them without straining your neck or twisting your body.
- The head restraint is positioned at least as high as the level of your eyes.
- Adjust position slightly throughout your journey as any posture can cause discomfort if held too long.



Warning

Research has shown that drivers who eat or drink at the wheel are more likely to crash due to the distraction involved. Additionally, you could be prosecuted for eating or drinking while driving if caught by a police officer who feels you are not in control of your vehicle.

As a long distance driver you are likely to be driving at breakfast, lunch-time or dinner time. Make sure you stop off for a break rather than risk eating behind the wheel.

- L**ook out for signs of tiredness.
- O**btain clues by reading the road ahead.
- N**ever allow your attitude to get out of control while driving.
- G**ive yourself regular breaks from driving.
- D**istractions are dangerous.
- I**t is crucial to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front.
- S**it up straight.
- T**urn off your phone while driving.
- A**djust mirrors so you don't have to stretch or twist to use them.
- N**ever drive when feeling unwell.
- C**arry out daily vehicle checks.
- E**nsure you can reach pedals and other controls comfortably.