



TRUCK TALK

AS FALL AND WINTER APPROACH. . .



There are a number of changes in our trucking and working environment once summer comes to an end. Hazards such as heat exhaustion and high temperatures that make our trucking systems work harder are replaced with more tolerable weather conditions and DEER! The North American White-tailed deer has become one of the most common hazards to all motor vehicles, including our trucks. In addition, moose, elk and antelope are becoming more common in many locations throughout the central U.S.

Fall is the peak breeding season for deer, and these normally nocturnal beasts may be active any time of the day or night from September to February. In addition, the active territory range for deer during the mating season becomes much larger as both sexes search for an appropriate mate. That expanded territory crosses highways and streets where deer are not normally found. Certainly, these factors increase the risk for all motor vehicles as animal/vehicle collisions occur over 1.5 million times annually. Further information on this subject can be found in our Safety Brief: How to Avoid Deer and Other Animal Collisions which is available through your loss control representative.

Animal guards for the front of trucks are an excellent idea when fitted properly. These guards are produced for the majority of over-the-road tractors in addition to lighter duty vehicles such as pickups and cargo vans. A quick internet search for "Deer Guard" will bring up many pages of example products. These products work to minimize damage to vehicles as a result of animal collisions and are available in many sizes, shapes and various materials. The popularity of these products is a testament to their effectiveness and ability to reduce costs associated with animal collisions.

In addition to increased chances for close encounters with animals on the highway, the fall and winter seasons increase chances of rapidly changing road conditions. This can occur several times during a driving shift in some parts of our country. The problem is not always that the roads are changing, but that drivers fail to recognize the changes. Let's face it, a wet road doesn't appear much different at 60 degrees than it does at 30 degrees. The level of danger is much higher at 30 degrees, and failing to recognize and adjust driving speed for this hazard can be disastrous. The traditional observation of rain beginning to freeze on the mirrors of your vehicle is still the best way to tell that the temperature is reaching the point of freezing unless your vehicle is equipped with heated mirrors. Most new trucks and cars are also equipped with external thermometers to help us recognize changing temperatures.

Major temperature changes can occur within relatively short distances of travel, especially with bridges – which freeze over first. Keeping a continual lookout for these changes in the fall and early winter can help avoid an accident. Constant awareness of the current weather conditions is always advisable, but even more so when the seasons are changing.

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