

TRUCK TALK

ACCIDENTS AT INTERSECTIONS

A Split Second Investment In Time

Accidents at intersections can be among the most serious vehicular collisions. Events that seem relatively minor can be much more serious than they initially appear. Injury and property damage are usually involved. Under some circumstances, liability can be difficult to assess. Accidents are far too common, considering there are roughly 8,000 fatalities annually at intersections.



Among the leading causes of many intersection accidents are drivers that fail to stop for red lights. The magnitude of this problem resulted in the formation of the community based safety organization known as "Stop Red Light Running" by the Federal Highway Administration. The single purpose of this organization is to raise public awareness of this problem and the number of injuries and deaths which result from these accidents.

The solution for decreasing the number of these accidents is simple. Do not run red lights and make every effort not to push the time limit of yellow lights. In a perfect world, these actions would solve the problem. For professional drivers, this is only part of the solution.

A professional driver should never assume that other motorists will honor a yellow and/or red light. Looking both directions while slightly hesitating before proceeding with a green light can make the difference between being involved in an accident or a close call. It takes surprisingly little time to check both directions even though you have the right of way. A split second investment in time is all it takes to avoid a serious accident.

Not all accidents at intersections involve traffic lights. In many instances, commercial vehicle drivers need to pull their vehicles away from a stop sign intersection to begin travel on a busy two lane roadway. Establishing a good habit of checking left/right/left for oncoming traffic can save commercial vehicles from pulling out in front of oncoming traffic.

Why do we say left/right/left? The traffic approaching from the left will be the traffic which reaches your vehicle first and where the greatest hazard is presented. When looking to the right, be sure that you look far enough down the road to assure you can pull out safely. The final rule for all drivers is if you are not sure you have enough time to completely enter traffic, wait for a larger, clear gap before starting.

Intersection awareness should also include staying watchful for other motorists slowing down to make a turn to a driveway or cross street. Ideally they are notifying all motorists around them with the use of a turn signal. Unfortunately, not all drivers use their turn signals.





The converse may also happen – sometimes a turn signal is indicated and the vehicle does not turn. Awareness is fundamental to avoid being the victim of another driver's error.

Right turn 'squeeze' accidents have been a problem since the first tractor trailer combination tried to turn right. Prevention on the part of the professional driver can help keep these accidents from unfolding. Protecting your right side by staying in the turning lane and driving deeper into the turn before making your turn can remove the opportunity for an inconsiderate motorist to pass on the right. Dragging your trailer right can accomplish the same result, however, an inconsiderate motorist may attempt to drive into this momentary space.

Each time you turn right, your primary goal is to see vehicle(s) on your right side and protect your opening from becoming a short cut.

Safety Tips at Intersections

- Increase your following distance
- Monitor cross traffic by checking left/right/left
- Be prepared to stop
- Avoid distractions
- Watch your speed

Plan your maneuver and signal your intention. Most importantly, be patient.

Having the right of way is not a right. It is a plan that allows drivers to anticipate actions that other drivers may execute in a given set of circumstances.

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