

TRUCK TALK

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Seasonal Driving Challenges

It's that time of the year again!

- Thanksgiving
- New Year's Eve
- Snow
- Wind
- Kids out of school
- Christmas
- Fog
- Ice
- Car drivers on cell phones
- Black ice

These are but a few of the things that come to mind with the winter season. The one thing they have in common is that they all cause additional stress for you, the professional driver. Your job is tough enough, dealing with shippers that have to have their freight RIGHT NOW, keeping your log book current, making sure you don't speed, dispatchers expecting you to call them, and not talking on your cell phone.

Since you are a professional driver, you are aware of all these things, and you do your job to the very best of your ability each and every day, in spite of all the distractions around you and the actions of others.

The reminders below are all things which you probably already know, but it is time now to go over them once again:

- SLOW DOWN
- Increase your following distance
- Do a thorough pre-trip inspection, a really good one this time
- SLOW DOWN SOME MORE
- Make sure you have your winter emergency survival kit with you
- Pay close attention to your tires. After all, friction is what makes you start and stop
- Check the weather forecast before you start out on your trip
- ARE YOU SLOWING DOWN YET?
- Stay off the cell phone

Remember that you are sharing the road with car, pickup and motorcycle drivers that are not trained professionals like you. Some of them think that because they have 4-wheel drive or all-wheel drive

that they can start and stop in snow and ice just like they can on dry roads. Some of them think it is OK to talk on their hand-held cell phone while driving. Some of the really stupid ones are still texting while driving. Some of them think that if they get right on your tail that you will either speed up or pull over so they can get by you. Some of them think that the ones on the entrance ramp to the interstate have the right of way. Some of them think you can stop just as fast as they can. Some of them (actually a LOT of them) just don't get it.

But, since you are the professional and are held to a higher standard, you must make allowances for the shortcomings of others in order to complete your trip safely and in a timely manner. You know that everything takes longer in the winter months. You know you need more time to react after seeing a hazard, such as traffic all of a sudden coming to a stop. You know you need to keep a better eye on your battery, windshield wipers, fuel filters, and other essential components of your truck. You know you have to make sure your tires are inflated properly and that they have more than just adequate tread. You know you have to slow down, increase your following distance, and do all the other things because you are a professional, and you know the other guy is not going to. You know that on a 400 mile trip, slowing down 5 mph will only increase your travel time by less than a half hour.

It is also that time of the year where you encounter more situations over which you have no control. A sudden snowstorm, the road all of a sudden going from wet to icy, the windshield all of a sudden fogging over. However, you also know it is the best opportunity to take control over those things you can, like slowing down and being constantly aware of your surroundings...and staying off the cell phone.

You know all of these things because you are a professional driver in a very challenging career, and you take great pride in a job well done. Be assured that your job is appreciated by all of us who go to the grocery store, the gas station, the corner drug store, and so on and so on. Thank you for a job well done!

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