

TRUCK TALK

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Personal Safety Attitude

Over the road truck driving is considered by OSHA and other regulating entities to be a hazardous occupation, and it is. The first thing that comes to mind is being injured in a motor vehicle accident. You drive tens of thousands of miles each year and are exposed to numerous hazards while on the road: inclement weather, road construction, irate motorists, road debris, unfamiliar routes, and receiving facilities that were built in 1930 and you pull a 53' trailer.

However, the most common injuries in the transportation industry occur not while you are in the truck, but when you are around the truck. Slips, trips, and falls continue to be the most frequent causes of lost time injuries. Failure to use the three-points of contact method to enter and exit the cab of the truck causes far more injuries than involvement in a motor vehicle accident.

Tripping or falling on slippery or uneven ground while doing your professional driver pre-trip inspection is also a common hazard. Climbing up and jumping down from the trailer instead of using a ladder has resulted in many a good driver staying home with a cast on an arm or leg instead of out on the road earning a living for the family. Please remember, gravity will always win!

Please check out the statements below and be honest about which one(s) apply to you:

- "I believe in safety as much as the next guy, but . . ."
- "We've always done it this way, and no one has ever been hurt."
- "I don't have time for that now; I'll do it later."
- "The three-points of contact is for old men and women."
- "There is no reason for a pre-trip this morning. Everything was fine when I parked last night."

Now check out these statements and be honest if any of them apply to you:

- "How could someone be injured here?"
- "It's not safe for me to do this alone, I better see if I can find some help."
- "It has been snowing for an hour now; guess I better put on my boots."
- "The dollies appear to be stuck; I'll go into the shop and see if someone can come out and lend me a hand."
- "It has been raining and I have been on the road for about 5 hours; I bet those steps are slippery from road grime."

The sets of scenarios above all have to do with a driver's safety attitude. The quality of one's attitude is also known as behavior. A person's behavior reflects the person's attitude. Attitude is pretty hard to define, but everyone recognizes a good safety attitude or a poor safety attitude when we see it.

Like many personal attributes, it is easier to judge safety attitude in others than in oneself. Take a minute to consider how often you project a good or a bad safety attitude. Further consider during which times you are more or less likely to be injured.

You as a professional driver are part of a very demanding industry, with the very important task of moving the nation's goods over vast expanses of geography. The equipment you operate is mechanically sound, the freight you are hauling is loaded correctly by the shipper, your truck is all fueled and ready to go, your professional driver pre-trip inspection is completed and documented, but are you mentally and physically ready to take to wheel and go out and do the very best job possible? If the answer is no, you might want to review the quotations stated earlier in this article.

