The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Our Roads, Our Responsibility initiative, launched on 11-3-16, is designed to raise awareness about common responsibilities for all drivers and all types of vehicles. The core mission of the FMCSA is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles on our roadways. This initiative emphasizes educating every motorist that all vehicles are not equal with respect to visibility and maneuverability.

As commercial motor vehicle operators, we realize that our vehicles have advanced technologically by leaps and bounds over the last 20 plus years, but nothing changes the fact that they are large (both in size and weight) and require more space to turn and stop. The high center of gravity of most commercial motor vehicles requires slowing more extensively for curves than required by other vehicles we share the road with. Stopping on a dime is NOT something a commercial motor vehicle is going to do!

The truck blind spot concept is difficult for many smaller vehicle drivers to understand. Blind spots on the sides, front and rear of commercial motor vehicles make smaller vehicles virtually invisible. For safe following distances, most commercial vehicles need to leave a much larger cushion when traveling in traffic. Sadly, many drivers of passenger vehicles see this as an opportunity to change lanes and fill the space, creating a dangerous situation for both the commercial vehicle and smaller vehicles.
Commercial motor vehicle operators are held to a higher standard than your average motorist simply because of the size of the vehicles. Large size equals large responsibility. Commercial drivers are considered professional drivers unless they demonstrate otherwise. For these reasons, there are some prevailing thoughts that should be engrained in every commercial vehicle driver and applied to every minute of every driving shift. From the FMCSA program, the following tips are offered:

1. **Defense! Defense!**
   - Commercial drivers must constantly be vigilant to detect unexpected road conditions, distracted drivers, and motorists who don’t understand how commercial vehicles operate.
   - Scan ahead about 15 seconds (a quarter mile on interstates, or one to two blocks in cities) for traffic issues, work zones, and other dangers.
   - Check mirrors every 8-10 seconds to be aware of vehicles entering your blind spots.

2. **Signal for Safety**
   - Signal and brake to give other drivers plenty of time to notice your intent.
   - If you must pull off the road, use flashers, reflective triangles, and road flares to alert approaching drivers.

3. **Know When to Slow**
   - Driving too fast for weather or road conditions or failing to slow down for curves or ramps create risks for spills and rollovers, as well as crashes.

4. **Maintain Your Vehicle**
   - Make sure that pre-trip safety inspections are completed, particularly for tires and brakes. Your life depends on them.
   - Check that your load is well-balanced and secure, as a shifting load can cause a rollover or loss of control. Loose materials create road hazards.

5. **Buckle Up**
   - Use your safety belt every time. Safety belts save lives, reduce injuries, and allow drivers to stay inside and in control of their vehicles in case of a crash. In 2014, 30% of truck drivers involved in fatal crashes were partially or totally ejected from their vehicles.

6. **Stay Sharp**
   - Get enough rest.
   - Don’t drive when you’re fatigued, too ill to focus, or on medications (including over-the-counter medicine) that make you drowsy or dizzy.

7. **Get the Right Information for Trip Planning**
   - Stay up-to-date on weather and road conditions, detours, and mountainous routes in order to plan driving time.
   - Be aware that non-commercial navigation systems and apps may not provide warning of height and weight limitations or other commercial vehicle restrictions.

8. **Practice Work Zone Safety**
   - Work zones present many hazards such as lane shifts, sudden stops, uneven road surfaces, moving workers and equipment, and confused passenger vehicle drivers. In 2014, 30% of fatal work zone crashes involved at least one large truck compared to only 11% involvement among all fatal crashes – so it’s vital to take work zone safety seriously.
   - Slow down, maintain extra following space, and to be prepared to stop.
   - Obey all work zone signs and signals.
   - Scan ahead for changing traffic patterns, and be alert to vehicles entering your blind spots.
   - Keep a sharp eye out for road workers and flag crews.

9. **Never Drive Distracted**
   - Texting is among the worst driving distractions. The odds of being involved in a crash, near-crash, or unintentional lane deviation are 23.2 times greater for truck and bus drivers who are texting while driving. Research shows that individuals texting while driving took their eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds on average. At 55 mph, this equates to traveling 371 feet (more than the length of a football field) without looking at the road.
   - It is illegal for a commercial driver to text while driving, and there are restrictions on using mobile phones (devices must be hands free, and dialed using no more than one button). Eating, drinking, interacting with a navigational device, map reading, controlling a pet, or any other activity that takes focus off the road can also be a deadly distraction. If you must attend to an activity other than driving, get off at the next exit or pullover – it’s not worth the risk.
On December 16, 2016, the Federal Motor Carrier Hours of Service (HOS) regulations were revised. The principal change is the reinstated 34-hour restart provision used prior to 2013. The full text of this change can be found at: https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/rulemaking/2011-32696

Summary of Hours of Service Rules for Property Carrying Drivers

11-Hour Driving Limit
May drive a maximum of 11 hours after 10 consecutive hours off duty.

14-Hour Limit
May not drive beyond the 14th consecutive hour after coming on duty, following 10 consecutive hours off duty. Off-duty time does not extend the 14-hour period.

Rest Breaks
May drive only if 8 hours or less have passed since end of driver's last off-duty or sleeper berth period of at least 30 minutes. Does not apply to drivers using either of the short-haul exceptions in 395.1(e). [49 CFR 397.5 mandatory “in attendance” time may be included in break if no other duties performed]
60/70-Hour Limit
May not drive after 60/70 hours on duty in 7/8 consecutive days. A driver may restart a 7/8 consecutive day period after taking 34 or more consecutive hours off duty.

Must include two periods from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. home terminal time, and may not be used once per week or 108 hours, measured from the beginning of the previous restart.

NOTICE: The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015 was enacted on December 16, 2014, suspending enforcement of requirements for use of the 34-hour restart. For more information see FMCSA's Federal Register notice: www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/hours-service/hours-service-drivers.

Sleeper Berth Provision
Drivers using the sleeper berth provision must take at least 8 consecutive hours in the sleeper berth, plus a separate 2 consecutive hours either in the sleeper berth, off duty, or any combination of the two.