



[Avoiding Accidents with Big Rigs](#)

by [John Demas](#) on 12/08/09 at 3:09 pm

If you've traveled down many highways surrounded by big rigs, you've probably thought about your own mortality many times. While a number of responsible big rig drivers slide behind the wheel every day, many other large trucks are driven by road hogs who show little respect for the much smaller vehicles all around them.

Although big rig drivers don't cause every accident, as was the case in one 2009 [Sacramento area crash](#), colliding with these large, heavy vehicles often leaves many injured or dead. When [two big rigs and five smaller vehicles](#) collided during a dust storm in southern California in early 2009, five of the victims had to be hospitalized and eight more required medical treatment at the scene. All of these deadly accidents may leave you wondering what any of us can do to better protect ourselves.

According to [one study](#), out of nearly 1,000 truckers found to be at fault in highway accidents between 2000 and 2005, "at least one in four had been convicted of a criminal offense or received deferred adjudication before the crash." (In a deferred adjudication case, a person's driving record won't indicate a conviction if he or she lawfully completed the probationary period.) This same research study found that, "More than 14 percent [of these same, at-fault drivers] had committed drug or alcohol offenses prior to their accidents, and more than one in 10 were felons." [Some states' taxpayer dollars](#) are actually used to train prison inmates to seek out these jobs.

While ex-cons may need extra help finding work, you do have to ask yourself if putting them behind the wheel of vehicles weighing up to [80,000](#) pounds is very wise, particularly if they've had substance abuse problems in the past.

This subject remains very complicated since "Employers have an incentive for hiring felons: [a federal tax credit](#) of \$2,400 on the first \$6,000 an ex-offender earns..." Joan Claybrook, who served for 27 years as the national president of [Public Citizen](#) until December of 2008, has noted that while some ex-cons might do fine in this type of work, other might not. As she put it "[The job pressures](#) truckers face and the fact that 5,000 people a year already die in large-truck crashes in the United States make felons and big rigs a potentially dangerous mix."

Regardless of the backgrounds of various big rig drivers, the rest of us must find ways to keep ourselves safe while traveling alongside these huge trucks on our local roads and highways. The

following facts and suggestions might help each of us drive more safely when in the presence of big rigs:

- An 80,000 pound truck traveling 65 miles per hour might need up to [300 feet](#) to come to a full stop after the driver hits the brakes;
- While you're in the process of passing a big rig, make sure you can fully see the front of the truck in the rearview mirror before pulling over in front of it;
- Bear in mind that when big rigs have to make a right turn, they often have to steer very far to the left to leave themselves enough room to make the turn. Therefore, never try to squeeze between the truck and the curb when the driver is doing this since you'll greatly increase your chances of getting hit. (Big rig drivers cannot see directly behind or beside their trucks when making such maneuvers).
- Be sure to travel far enough behind a truck at all times, especially during poor weather conditions;
- Help support legislative efforts to prevent more triple trailer trucks from traveling down this country's roads and freeways;
- Given the size of the big rigs, try to accommodate their lane changes and other lawful acts whenever possible;
- Always report big rig drivers who are driving dangerously to the local authorities (or state highway patrol) to protect yourself and others as soon as you can safely place such a call. Be sure to write down the driver's company name, which state issued their truck's license plate and the complete license plate number.
- When you're entering a busy freeway, never assume the big rig driver coming up behind you can easily see you as you enter - be sure to leave the truck plenty of room to change lanes or continue approaching you at its current speed;
- Make sure you always keep your brakes, windshield wipers and tire treads in good shape so that you can react promptly and safely when a big rig or other vehicle forces you to make an unexpected maneuver;
- Big rig drivers often travel well beyond the speed limit to get their cargo to their next destination as soon as possible. Never try to outrun them. Excessive speed is nearly always a factor in accidents involving big rigs.

By keeping in mind the facts and suggestions shared above, you should be able to drive safely alongside most big rigs. However, if you are ever hurt in an accident with a big rig, please keep in mind that our law firm has successfully represented many accident victims in similar cases over the years. We can help you recover all that you're entitled to receive under the law.