

# JANUARY 2019 TARP

## SAFE FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Failure to maintain a safe following distance behind the vehicle in front of you can lead to either a "near miss" or a traffic accident. A near miss is one of those heart-pounding situations in which you realize just how close you came to a collision. You can still be cited for following too closely or tailgating or worse. An accident is costly in both time and money. Besides the damage done to your truck and the other vehicle(s) involved, there may be personal injuries or fatalities.

### TIPS:

- In order to maintain a safe following distance, always bear in mind your terrain and what could be "over the hill."
- Always make sure that you can brake safely and smoothly. Remember, it takes longer to stop in certain conditions. Your following distance should be geared to many things including traffic flow and weather.
- While some trucks are equipped with anti-lock brakes (ABS), that equipment may not totally prevent skidding and jackknifing, especially in inclement weather.
- Be a defensive driver. Anticipate the unexpected.
- One rule of following distance is to never ever overdrive your headlights. Be especially alert when driving during non-daylight hours.
- Always perform a pre-trip inspection and verify that your brakes are adjusted correctly. Even if you have been maintaining proper following distance, all bets are off regarding being able to brake effectively if your brakes don't work!
- Never get in a hurry. Remember that you are a professional and that you are being paid to move freight safely from one location to another. The well-being of you as a person, the motoring public around you, your truck and the freight you are hauling are worth whatever extra time you need to be safe.
- As with other truck operations, so it is with maintaining a safe following distance behind other vehicles.

Semi-tractor trailers cannot stop on a dime. Obviously, a loaded big rig takes longer to stop than a four-wheeled vehicle. However, professional drivers need to allow an even greater amount of total stopping distance based on conditions.

Driving in any of the following situations requires greater total stopping distance:

- at night
- on secondary roads
- in hilly or mountainous areas
- along curvy roads
- when ever precipitation is falling or the roads have received precipitation.

Braking and stopping distance are also affected by a truck's weight. There are significant differences in stopping ability between: a truck with a loaded trailer -- a truck with an empty trailer -- driving just the tractor. You might think it would be easier to stop with just the tractor or with no load on the trailer, but we've found that just the opposite is true.

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