

SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

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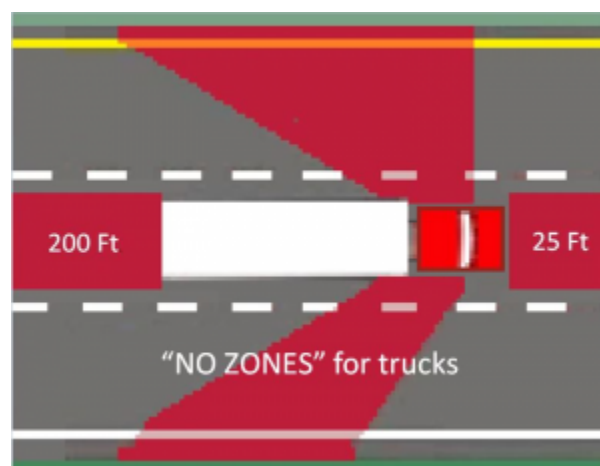


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Sharing The Road With Large Vehicles

When teaching your teen how to drive, special emphasis needs to be given to sharing the road with large vehicles. Large vehicles include trucks, buses and trains. The biggest issue with large vehicles is their large blind spots and limited maneuverability.

Semi-Trucks – Semis are the most common large vehicle on the road. The biggest problem with semis is their large blind spots. Truckers refer to these blind spots as “No-Zones,” meaning other vehicles should avoid driving in those zones. The trucker can’t see vehicles in the No-Zones so, if he or she needs to change lanes or stop quickly, they may take out an unseen vehicle loitering in one of their No-Zones. When driving around trucks, drivers need to follow the rule that says, “If you can’t see the driver’s face in his rearview mirror, he can’t see you.”



In crashes involving trucks and smaller vehicles, statistics show that the driver of the smaller vehicle is at fault about 70% of the time.

The biggest complaint truckers have regarding other vehicles is when the smaller vehicle pulls into the lane ahead of a truck but doesn't allow enough free space for the truck to stop or maneuver safely. A large truck can weigh up to 80,000 pounds and there is no possible way that a vehicle weighing that much, traveling at highway speeds, can stop quickly. When passing a truck, drivers should wait until they can see both of the truck's headlights in the center rearview mirror before pulling into the lane ahead of the truck.

Failing to yield is another big issue around trucks. One thing all large vehicles have in common is that they appear to be going much more slowly than they actually are. Failing to recognize that fact and pulling out in front of a large vehicle can be disastrous.

Buses – Buses have many of the same limitations that trucks have. They're heavy and they have large blind spots. Drivers should obey the same rules around buses that they do around trucks.

Trains – Trains don't have the same weight limitations that trucks have. A single car can weigh up to 286,000 pounds and many trains are over a mile long. In an emergency stop, it can take up to a mile for a train to come to a complete stop.

If a driver tries to beat out a train at a railroad crossing by going around the crossing bars, the train will win every time. The couple of minutes you may have to wait for a train to pass is nothing compared to the alternative.

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Automatic Safety Devices

Newer vehicles are coming with a lot of safety features but not all safety features are alike. It's important to know the difference between them if they are to be used correctly.

Cruise control - Cruise control can be your best friend when it comes to avoiding a speeding ticket. If you pay attention to the speed limit signs and always set your cruise control for the proper posted speed, you won't have to worry about whether or not your speed is too high when you see that police car by the side of the road.



Cruise control shouldn't be used in rain or snow because, if your tires start to spin, the cruise control will read that as slowing down and will automatically increase the speed. That's not something you want to have happen on slippery roads.

Adaptive or Autonomous Cruise Control (ACC) - ACC takes cruise control to a new level by combining standard cruise control with radar and an engine control computer to prevent a distracted driver from following the vehicle ahead too closely. If you're using cruise control and the radar senses that you are approaching the vehicle ahead too closely, it will slow the engine to maintain a safe following distance. Even if you step on the gas, the ACC won't allow the engine speed to increase until you're at a safe distance behind the vehicle ahead.

If you change lanes or the vehicle ahead speeds up, the ACC will automatically resume the speed set on your cruise control.

Remember that ACC doesn't apply the brakes or stop your vehicle in the event the vehicle ahead should stop. It's only an aid.

Collision Avoidance System (CAS) or Pre-Collision System (PCS) - CAS works together with the adaptive cruise control to sound a warning if you should get too close to the vehicle ahead and then, if the driver doesn't respond quickly enough, the system activates braking assistance to make it easier for the driver to stop in time.

In some vehicles, if the system determines that a collision is unavoidable, the system will also tighten the seat belt tension to remove any slack in the belts.

Braking assistance is just that; it doesn't stop the car, it just partially applies brake pressure or pre-charges the braking system to make the job easier for the driver and to lessen the collision forces; the driver has to actually step on the brakes to bring the vehicle to a full stop.

It's very important that you don't confuse braking assist with automatic braking and assume the vehicle will stop on its own.

Usually, the driver has the option to set the sensitivity of the system to sound the alert at varying distances.

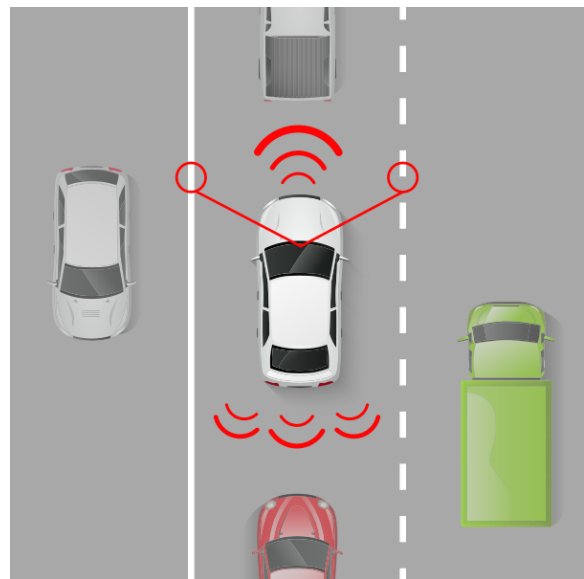
Automatic braking - Automatic braking, as part of an enhanced collision avoidance system will fully apply the brakes and bring the vehicle to a full stop if there's an obstacle on the road ahead. Automatic braking is usually an option on higher priced models.

Even with automatic braking, the driver should be alert and ready to take over if the system should fail.

Lane Departure Alert (LDA) - The Lane Departure Alert system uses cameras and radar to determine if the vehicle is inside the lane markers and warns the driver with a tone and warning light that the vehicle is straying too close to the edge of the lane.

The Lane Departure Warning system only warns you when you are going over the lane marker, it doesn't work to actually keep you within the lanes.

Lane Departure Prevention - The Lane Departure Prevention system works with the Anti-lock Brakes and Electronic Stability Control systems to actively prevent the vehicle from straying out of the lane.



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