

Highway Horse Sense



Cutting Off Large Trucks: Unsafe At Any Speed

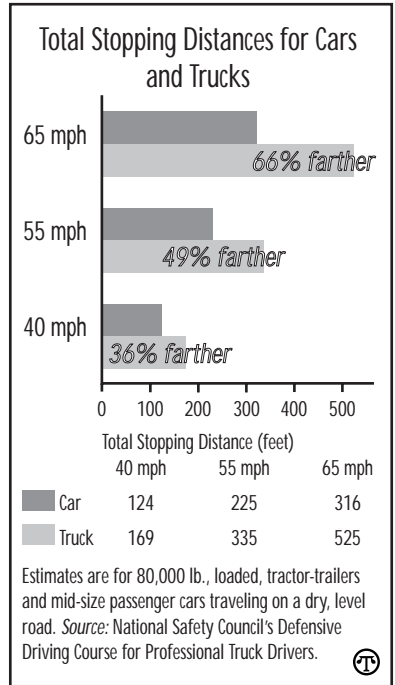
(NAPSA)—Pulling out into traffic, especially at highway speeds, is one of the trickier maneuvers that drivers must master. What many people fail to realize, however, is how many factors affect the amount of time and speed needed to do so safely—especially when the oncoming vehicle is a much larger one, such as a tractor trailer.

Many drivers, when pulling into traffic, consider how far away approaching cars are, rather than how fast they're coming. In addition, there is a human tendency to underestimate the speed of large approaching objects, such as trucks or trains.

These factors, combined with ordinary highway experience—in which drivers are generally accustomed to allowing for the speed of similar-sized vehicles—put many people at risk for deadly collisions. That's because it takes trucks and other large vehicles a lot longer to slow down and/or stop than cars.

According to the National Safety Council, a fully loaded tractor trailer, traveling on a level, dry surface at 65 miles per hour, requires 66 percent more stopping distance than a passenger car traveling at the same speed. Even at lesser speeds, trucks need more room; at 40 mph, for example, a truck needs 36 percent more stopping distance.

Reaction time is critical. Decisions made with regard to traffic happen within fractions of a second, yet consider: In $\frac{1}{4}$ of a second, a truck traveling at 65 mph goes almost 24 feet. That's more than two car lengths—far enough



Trucks need more time (and distance) to stop than passenger cars do.

that drivers have very little room for error.

In this case, safety is simple. Be aware that trucks need more time—and distance—to stop or slow down, and give these vehicles the room they need. Cutting off a truck in traffic may save you a few seconds in getting to where you're going—if you ever get there. Guess wrong when a large truck is involved and you're dead.

To learn more about truck and bus safety, visit the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Web site at www.fmcsa.dot.gov.