



PENNSYLVANIA LUMBERMENS MUTUAL
INSURANCE COMPANY

MAKING RIGHT HAND TURNS

Making a right turn with long vehicles creates problems that automobile drivers, motorcyclists, or bicyclists do not recognize. Blind spots make it difficult for the truck driver to see other vehicles. Vehicle length forces trucks to make wide turns, encroaching upon adjacent lanes of traffic. Improper tracking of vehicles makes it difficult for the driver to judge the position of the vehicle. Turning takes longer to complete, thus increasing exposure time to hazards. Drivers should recognize the hazards created while turning and follow proper procedures to minimize them.

Large tractor-trailer rigs and extended length piggy-back straight trucks, by the nature of their size, make wide right turns. That is, they cannot make a right turn from the right lane like smaller vehicles. When maneuvering to make a right hand turn, the positioning of the vehicle when setting up a turn, may give the appearance of an open lane available for use by an unsuspecting person not seeing the truck's turn signal. Many car, motorcycle and bicycle operators have been crushed by the rear wheels of straight trucks and the wheels of semi-trailers.

Turns are one of the highest frequency sources of trucking accidents. More incidents occur from right turns than from left turns, because the driver has much less visibility when turning right. The area on the right side of the truck or tractor is known as the "blind side."

In addition to accidents involving vehicles trying to squeeze along the right side of the truck and/or trailer, an additional critical item of contact in a turn is the off-track of a semi trailer. However, all turns can be made safely by following some simple guidelines:

- Move to the right lane well in advance of intersection, positioned to make a safe turn.
- When turning, keep rear of vehicle to the right, blocking other vehicles from passing on the right.
- If encroaching upon other lanes, wait for other vehicles to clear and then turn slowly.
- Be careful that improper tracking does not cause the vehicle or trailer to ride up onto curb or strike stationary objects.
- On your approach, size up the area you're going to turn into.
- Identify all moving/parked vehicles and all fixed objects.
- Check your mirrors frequently, before, into and through the turn.
- Do not cross into the lanes of approaching traffic before turning.
- Block out other traffic from passing on the right.
- Decide the type of turn you'll make beforehand and get in proper set-up position.
- Signal your intentions well in advance—alert all other traffic to what you'll be doing.
- Be in second gear before starting the turn and don't shift gears while turning.
- Travel at an idle speed—very slowly.
- Never back up once you have started your turn.

The truck driver is responsible for evaluating the area and specific driving situation, think about the maneuver that they are about to perform, and then proceeding safely and professionally. The operating skill of a professional truck driver is an individual talent. As a professional driver, the future of a company can be directly related to attitude regarding driving in a safe manner. If a driver takes this responsibility seriously, highway driving performance will improve.

Making a right turn with long vehicles creates problems that other vehicle operators do not have. Blind spots make it difficult to see other vehicles. Vehicle length forces drivers to make wide turns, encroaching upon adjacent lanes of traffic. Improper tracking of vehicles makes it difficult for the driver to judge position. Turning takes longer to complete, thus increasing exposure time to hazards. Drivers should recognize these hazards that create right turn accidents and follow a specific procedure to minimize accidents.

Ultimately the truck driver is in control of and responsible for the vehicle. The driver is the only one who can prevent a right hand turn accident. When making right hand turns, the turning guidelines outlined above should be followed to minimize turning exposures that will lead to the prevention of right hand turn accidents.