

Safety Bulletin

Beat the Holiday Blues With These 5 Tips for Safe Driving

There's no place like home for the holidays, so the old song goes. But that's exactly why the holiday season can be so stressful for truck drivers.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) estimated that 94.7 million travelers hit the road last year between Christmas and New Year's Day, a number that has increased by 3 percent each year. Since 2005, AAA estimates that total year-end holiday travel volume has grown by more than 21.6 million, an increase of more than 25%.



With so much traffic, truck drivers must be extra careful on the roads. Add in increased workloads due to holiday shipping, the arrival of colder weather in many states, and your own expectations for spending time at home with family, and it's a recipe for the holiday blues.

Use these five safe driving tips to beat those blues and keep the roads safe:

- 1. Plan in advance.** Heavy traffic means potential slowdowns and detours. So don't rely solely on your truck's GPS. Plan your route in advance, and determine which alternate routes may work best if you encounter congestion. If possible, consider avoiding roads that motorists will use to access malls or large shopping plazas.
- 2. Check your emergency kit.** Make sure it includes everything you need for winter weather, such as jumper cables, road flares, blankets, and kitty litter or sand for traction if you get stuck on snow or ice. A few bottles of water, some canned food and a battery-operated radio are good to include, too, in case you get stranded. And make sure your fire extinguisher is fully charged and your first-aid kit is stocked.
- 3. Inspect your rig.** Replace any cracked or torn windshield wipers. Check your tire pressure (a 10-degree drop in temperature means a 1-pound drop in pounds per square inch, or PSI). Check your fluid levels. Make sure your lights and blinkers work properly. Remove any snow or ice from your truck, and keep your headlights, taillights and mirrors clear.
- 4. Watch for drunk drivers.** Nationally, an average of 300 people died in drunk driving crashes during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day over the last five years, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). So take extra caution, especially if you see someone speeding, swerving or driving recklessly.
- 5. When in doubt, think safety first.** Wear that seat belt. Stay alert. Get plenty of rest. Watch your blind spots. And take any other precaution you might need.



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