

1 DO YOUR TRUCK AND TRAILER PRE-TRIP

Did you do your pre-trip? Checking your vehicle before you drive could not only save your life, it could save the life of your passengers or other people. Before you drive away ask yourself four questions. Did you check under the hood? Did you get in and check your gauges? Did you do a walk around of the entire vehicle? Did you get in, slowly pull ahead to check your steering and breaks? These steps are critical to ensuring that you have a safe trip.

2 GET THE PRE-WORK INFORMATION YOU NEED

If you are going to a new area, talk to your supervisor to find out where you're headed, who else is hauling there, and what usual and unusual hazards you can expect to encounter. If your supervisor doesn't know, check with the forester, the dispatcher, or find another trucker on that haul and get the straight goods from them. Avoid the stress of guessing what you'll find. Think about your day. What will be the same? What will be different?

3 WEAR YOUR SEATBELT

Seatbelts save lives. If worn properly, your seatbelt will prevent you from being thrown around or out of your vehicle during a crash. Transport Canada reports that 93% of Canadians buckle up, the seven per cent who don't account for almost 40 per cent of the fatalities of vehicle collisions. Seatbelts save about 1,000 lives a year, more could be saved if everyone buckled up.

4 PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER

Check the forecast the night before. Knowing what you are likely to encounter puts you in control. If conditions are challenging, reduce your stress by leaving a few minutes early, giving yourself time to drive at a casual pace, and according to road conditions. Today is not the day to worry about making your cycle time.

5 PAY ATTENTION TO THE TEMPERATURE

When temperatures hover a few degrees either side of zero, conditions get tricky. In areas where elevation changes dramatically, so can the conditions and your traction.

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6 KEEP AN EYE ON THE GLAZE

Scan the road ahead of you and watch for shine in the tracks ahead – it's slippery out there! If you can't quite see it in your lane, briefly glance at the road in the oncoming lane, if it looks slick in their lane, it's probably slick in your lane. .

7 SET YOUR EYES TO ACTIVE SCAN

As you drive, your environment changes, you have to constantly refresh your view. Scan as far down the road as you can see. What do the things you see – road signs, traffic, intersections, wildlife, leaning tree, patch of ice, unusual features – tell you? Re-direct your gaze to the zone half way between you and the next corner. What new information do you see that will cause you to adjust your speed, position or plan? Check the mirrors every 7 or 8 seconds (conditions permitting). Glance at the dashboard. Check the ditches. Repeat often, and with a few variations.

8 HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

What's my escape route? The vehicle coming over the hill looks a little skittish – what will I do if they get caught in the slush, and are pulled into my lane? That ditch on the right looks deep, so I better slack off and be ready for a quick stop, if necessary. Think ahead – what will I do if.....?

9 USE THE BUDDY SYSTEM

If you see something that wasn't there yesterday, let your co-workers know. If you know there's a new person on your haul, tell them about that nasty frost heave at 17 km. If they don't know about it, and it results in a crash, it would be stressful for you too. You're all in this together.

10 DITCH THE DISTRACTIONS

Keep both hands on the wheel, focus on driving, and leave the gadgets alone! You can check your phone once you are parked.

USE TOOLS TO HELP YOU SEE YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

- A clean windshield – inside and out.
- Extra windshield washer fluid.
- A good set of sun glasses. Maybe even 2 sets: one for bright sunny days, and another set for those low light, poor visibility conditions. Less eye strain = lower driver fatigue.
- Find a headlight combination that works. 10 million candle-power doesn't help you in a blinding snowstorm, they simply increase the glare reflected back to your eyes. Some guys like an amber fog light to soften the glare of driving snow. Maybe point one a little toward the right hand ditch – you might not be able to see the centre-line, but if you can use the snow bank or ditch line as a steady reference, you are miles ahead. Plus you can see that moose coming out of the ditch a half-second earlier.
- Patience and courtesy – Other folks out on the trail might not be the skilled professional you are, maybe they don't have winter tires and didn't scrape the windshield. Or, they're driving too fast for conditions while trying to find the Highway Cam on their Blackberry. Practice your best driving etiquette. Give them some space. Let 'em go ahead. Are they endangering the lives of others on the trail? Let the RCMP know. Don't let them compromise your safe trucking zone.

10

WINTER DRIVING TIPS FOR BC LOG HAULERS



BC Forest Safety