



Maintain a Safe Speed Behind the Wheel

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Every trip begins with a commitment to safety. As a professional commercial motor vehicle driver, you understand the dangers of driving too fast for conditions and the importance of staying focused behind the wheel. Speeding endangers not only the life of the speeder, but also all the people on the road around them.

In fact, according to the latest figures available from the Department of Transportation, speeding claims more than 12,000 every year. That accounts for approximately one-third of all highway fatalities. Several years ago, the National Highway Traffic Administration reported that speeding increases crash risk by both increasing the likelihood of being involved in a crash as well as increasing the severity of injuries sustained by all road users in a crash.

Sadly, speeding remains a widely accepted driving behavior reinforced among motorists, policymakers and transportation stakeholders. National surveys of U.S. drivers have found that although drivers identify speeding as risky, drivers nonetheless continue to speed. Too many drivers have a minimal perception of risk of either getting a ticket, causing a crash, or violating social norms.

Aside from federal, state, and local policy, enforcement, and technology, as professionals, we have the responsibility to take a number of key action steps to better address speeding. Below are some tips that will help you maintain a safe speed for various driving conditions.

- **Know before you go:** Arrive for your shift early and well-rested. Know the road and traffic conditions and don't be in a hurry.
- **Review your route:** Be aware of work zones, detours, mountainous terrain and changing road conditions to anticipate when a slower speed may be necessary.
- **Check the weather:** Hazardous conditions like rain, sleet or snow can greatly increase the stopping distance for CMVs. Reduce your driving speed in adverse road and weather conditions. Adjust your speed to safely match weather conditions, road conditions, visibility and traffic.
- **Inspect your vehicle:** Ensure you conduct pre-trip safety checks, particularly for tires and brakes. This helps you control the speed of your vehicle throughout your trip.
- **Reduce speed on curves and ramps:** The speed limits posted on curve warning signs may be intended for passenger vehicles, but CMVs should reduce speed even further. Approach curves and entrance/exit ramps at a safe speed to avoid rollovers. Studies have shown large trucks entering a curve, even at the posted speed limit, have lost control and rolled over due to their high center of gravity. Some 40% of speeding-related fatalities occur on curves.
- **Slow down with a loaded trailer:** Loaded trailers have a higher center of gravity and sudden speed adjustment may cause the load to shift, leading to skidding or a rollover.
- **Slow down in work zones:** Before entering a work zone, decrease your speed, merge into the correct lane well ahead of any lane closures, and be prepared to slow down or stop suddenly.

It is everyone's responsibility to help address this problem.