



## Chapter C-3 SHARING THE ROAD SAFELY

### The Road Has Many Users

Our streets and highways are becoming more crowded every day. Whether you are driving your car, truck, SUV, RV, riding your bike, or merely walking, you share the road with other vehicles and drivers. We always need to be aware that we as drivers are not the only users of our streets and highways and other people have certain rights and privileges on the highways of which automobile drivers must be aware and must respect.

We share the road with:

- Pedestrians
- Bicyclists
- Motorcyclists and motor-driven bicycles
- Large Trucks and Buses
- Recreational Vehicles (RVs)
- Farm Machinery
- Animals

As responsible drivers we must know and practice the rules for sharing the road safely. You should always be aware of the traffic around you and be prepared for emergency situations. Use common sense and courtesy with other users of our streets and highways.

Your responsibility as a defensive driver includes making allowances for and adapting to the other persons and vehicles on the road. There are skills and techniques you should use for sharing the road. Knowing what to do and how to do it can help you stay alive and avoid damaging your car or someone else's vehicle or causing bodily injury to other highway users.

### SHARING THE ROAD WITH PEDESTRIANS

As a driver you must recognize the special safety needs of pedestrians. Any person afoot or using a motorized or non-motorized wheelchair are considered a pedestrian by state law. You should be especially alert for young, elderly, disabled and intoxicated pedestrians. They are the most frequent victims in auto-pedestrian collisions.

Generally, pedestrians have the right-of-way at all intersections. There is a crosswalk at every intersection, even if painted lines and boundaries do not mark the crossing. Crosswalks are intended to encourage people to cross only at certain locations. As you know, some people will cross at locations other than cross walks. As the person controlling the potentially dangerous machine, it's your job to "play it safe" where pedestrians are concerned and protect them when you see they may be in danger. Regardless of the rules of the road or right-of-way, the law specifically requires YOU, as a driver, to exercise great care and extreme caution to avoid striking pedestrians.

### Your Role as a Driver

Drivers should not block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn. You also should not stop with a portion of your vehicle over the crosswalk area. Blocking the crosswalk forces pedestrians to go around your vehicle and puts them in a dangerous situation.

- As a driver it is your responsibility to yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be to yield to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon half of the roadway which you are traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.
- When in a marked school zone when a warning flasher or flashers are in operation, as a driver you shall stop to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a marked crosswalk or at an intersection with no marked crosswalk. You shall remain stopped until the pedestrian has crossed the roadway on which your vehicle is stopped. Remember it's the law!
- Be alert to persons entering the roadway or crosswalks at any location where pedestrian traffic is heavy.
- Be alert to pedestrians to the right of your vehicle and be especially watchful for pedestrians when you are making a right turn.
- You must immediately yield to pedestrians as soon as they step off the curb into the roadway when the pedestrian is on your half of the road or so close to your half of the road that they are in a position of danger.
- Always yield to blind pedestrians carrying a white, metallic, red tipped white cane or using a guide dog.
- Children are often the least predictable pedestrians and the most difficult to see. Take extra care to look out for children in residential areas and at times and places where children are likely to be around. (school zones, school bus stops, playgrounds, parks, near ice cream or snack vendor vehicles /carts).
- Yield to pedestrians walking on the sidewalk when you're entering or leaving a driveway, public parking garage, alley or parking lot and your path of travel crosses the sidewalk.
- Don't honk your horn, rev up your engine or do anything to rush or scare a pedestrian in front of your car, even if you have the legal right-of-way.

### Your Role as a Pedestrian

Most of us cross streets and highways every day. We take for granted that we can cross without incident, because most of the time we do. However, sometimes we aren't so fortunate. Each year approximately 7,000 pedestrians die and 100,000 are injured in traffic related accidents. Young children and the elderly are more likely to be killed or injured in a pedestrian related traffic accident.

While it is easy to blame drivers, they are not always responsible for these crashes. All too often, pedestrians are the cause of such accidents. These senseless tragedies don't have to happen. You can avoid potential injuries and even death by reviewing the advice for safe street crossing. You too will be a pedestrian on occasion. So learn and obey the common sense rules when the roles are reversed.

When you are a pedestrian, do all you can to make yourself visible and to help prevent crashes.

### **Safety Tips for Pedestrians**

As a pedestrian, you are at a major disadvantage when crossing streets, intersections and standing on corners. You are not always visible to drivers; especially for large truck and bus drivers and you don't stand a chance if a vehicle hits you. Pedestrians need to be careful of all vehicles and never take chances when they are sharing the road with large vehicles, like trucks and buses. Here are some safety tips that can keep you safe when walking from one destination to another.

#### ***WALKING***

Pedestrians must walk along sidewalks when available. It is unlawful for pedestrians to walk in the road where there are sidewalks.

When there are no sidewalks, always walk on the left side of the road facing traffic (traffic should be coming toward you), this allows you to see any sudden dangers coming at you. Two or more pedestrians should walk in single file and never side by side of each other.

#### ***BE ALERT***

Be alert and ready to move out of the way in case a driver cannot see you. It is not a good idea to walk or jog along busy roadways while wearing audio headphones or listening to portable audio devices. You may not hear the important traffic sounds that would help you avoid potential dangers.

#### ***WATCH YOUR WALKWAYS***

Walk on sidewalks and in crosswalks whenever possible. It is important to pay attention to walk signals and keep a safe distance when standing on street corners. Trucks and buses make wide right turns and occasionally run up onto the corner of the sidewalk. It is important for you to be alert and to move back. Most likely, the truck driver will not see you or may be distracted and you could be seriously injured or killed if hit.

#### ***KNOW YOUR NO-ZONES***

Be careful of the blind spots, or No-Zones, around cars, trucks, and buses when walking near or around them. Always assume the driver does not know that you are there. Because of a truck's large blind spots, a driver may not see, so it is up to you to avoid a crash. Never walk behind a truck when it is backing up; truck drivers cannot see directly behind the truck and could seriously injure you.

#### ***STOPPING DISTANCES***

Use caution when crossing intersections and streets. You may think vehicles will stop for you, but they may not see you or even be able to stop. Remember, trucks, cars, motorcycles and bicyclists, all have different stopping capabilities. In fact, trucks can take much more space to stop than passenger vehicles. Never take a chance with a truck, even if the driver sees you he may not be able to stop.

#### ***MAKE YOURSELF VISIBLE***

Wear bright or reflective clothing, especially when walking at night. Dressing to be seen will make it safer for you and drivers. Professional drivers do a lot of driving at night, and there's a good chance a truck driver will not see you if you don't make yourself visible. Carrying a flashlight is your safest bet for being seen at night.

#### ***WATCH OUT FOR WIDE LOADS***

Trucks with wide loads have very limited visibility as well as difficulty maneuvering. Wide loads are much heavier and take up lots of room on the road. You need to be aware when walking near a truck with a wide load, because the driver may not see you. Trucks with wide loads make even wider right turns, require more space, and take even longer to stop than other trucks on the road. Remember to keep your distance when walking around these large trucks.

#### ***Crossing***

**Before crossing, stop** at the curb, edge of the road, or corner before proceeding.

**Look left-right-left**, and if it's clear, begin crossing, look over your shoulder for turning vehicles.

**Continue to check for approaching traffic** while crossing.

At intersections with traffic lights and pedestrian signals, it's important to follow the signals carefully. Pedestrians may cross on green traffic signal or when you see the WALK Signal, following the basic rules for crossing.

If you are in the middle of the street and the DON'T WALK signal starts flashing, continue walking. You will have time to complete the crossing.

Pedestrians may NOT cross on a red or yellow traffic light, or on a red-green combines light unless facing a WALK signal. (This is red for turn(s) while green is for straight traffic or vice versa).

On a green arrow, whether alone or accompanied by a steady red or yellow, you may enter the road ONLY if you can do so safely without interfering with vehicle traffic.

The WALK signal and the green traffic light indicate that it's your turn to cross the street, but they do NOT mean it is SAFE to cross. The WALK signal, the GREEN light means LOOK and then IF it's safe, proceed to cross.

Although drivers must yield to pedestrians crossing the roadway, pedestrians must not suddenly leave a curb or other safe waiting place and walk into the path of vehicle traffic if it so close that it is an immediate hazard. Vehicles cannot stop at once!

## SHARING THE ROAD WITH BICYCLES

On most roadways, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as other roadway users and in most cases, they must share the lane. Bicyclists are prohibited on limited-access highways, expressways and certain other marked roadways. Bicyclists are required to travel on the right hand side of the road and travel in the same direction as vehicles. They must ride as close to the right side of the road as practical, while avoiding road hazards that could cause them to swerve into traffic. When you are sharing the road with bicyclists, you should always expect the rider to make sudden moves. Trash, minor oil slicks, a pothole, or crack in the concrete, a barking dog, a parked car or a car door opening as well as other surprises can force a bicycle rider to swerve suddenly in front of you.

Similarly, when cyclists are traveling past parked cars, they tend to move away from the cars, toward the center of the lane. This is to avoid injuring or being injured by persons getting out of those cars. In such cases, the bicyclist is operating the bicycle properly. If possible, give the cyclist the entire lane. When road conditions prevent this, pass the cyclist with extreme caution. Cyclists who are not on the extreme right hand side of the lane are not being careless, but are in fact attempting to account for traffic conditions and/or preparing to make a left turn.

Bicycles are hard to see. The riders are exposed and easily injured in a collision. Oncoming bicycle traffic is often overlooked or its speed misjudged.

When following bicyclists, give them plenty of room and be prepared to stop quickly. Use extra caution during rainy and icy weather. At night, do not use high beams when you see an oncoming bicycle rider.

### Safety Tips for Drivers:

- When passing and overtaking a bicyclist proceeding in the same direction, do so slowly and leave at least a distance between you and the bicycle of not less than 3 feet. It's the law in Tennessee! Also be sure to maintain this clearance until safely past the overtaken bicycle.
- A driver should never attempt passing between a bicyclist and oncoming vehicles on a two-lane road. Slow down and allow vehicles to pass the rider safely.
- NEVER pass a bicycle if the street is too narrow or you would force the bicyclist too close to parked vehicles. Wait until there is enough room to let you pass safely.



- If you are about to pass a bicycle on a narrow road and you think the rider doesn't know your coming, tap your horn gently and briefly as a signal that you're going to pass. Don't blast your horn or otherwise startle or try to intimidate the bicyclist.
- The most common causes of collisions are drivers turning left in front of an oncoming bicycle or turning right, across the path of the bicycle.
- When your vehicle is turning left and there is a bicyclist entering the intersection from the opposite direction, you should wait for the bicyclist to pass before making the turn. Also, if your vehicle is sharing the left turn lane with a bicyclist, stay behind them until they have safely completed their turn.
- If your vehicle is turning right and a bicyclist is approaching on the right, let the bicyclist go through the intersection first before making a right turn. Remember to always signal your turns.
- Merge with bicycle traffic when preparing for a right turn. Don't turn directly across the path of the bicyclist.
- Drivers often fail to pick the bicyclist out of the traffic scene, or inaccurately judge the speed of cyclists making a left turn.
- Watch for bicycle riders turning in front of you without looking or signaling, especially if the rider is a child.
- Most bicyclists maintain eye contact with drivers of vehicles around them, particularly when the cyclist or vehicle is making a turn. Before turning, a driver should attempt to gain and maintain eye contact with the bicyclist to ensure a safer turn.

### Residential Areas are Danger Zones for Bicycles

Bicyclists may ride in the middle of the street and disregard stop signs and traffic signals. BE CAREFUL in all neighborhood areas where children and teenagers might be riding.

Children riding bicycles create special problems for drivers. Children are not capable of proper judgment in determining traffic conditions, therefore drivers should be alert to the possibility of erratic movement and sudden changes in direction when children on bicycles are present.

Watch out for bikes coming out of driveways or from behind parked cars or other obstructions.

Bicyclists riding at night present visibility problems for drivers. At night, watch the side of the road for bicyclists. Bicyclists are required to have proper illumination, a front and rear deflector, but drivers should be aware that bicyclists are not easily seen. Lights from approaching traffic may make them even harder to see at night.

If you see a bicyclist with a red or orange pennant flag on the antennae attached to the bike, slow down: this is a common symbol to indicate the rider has impaired hearing.

### **Lane Positions for Bicycles**

Bicyclists are required to ride as far right in the lane as possible only when a car and a bicycle, side by side, can safely share the lane. Even then, there are certain times when a bicycle can take the full lane.

A bicyclist should be allowed full use of the lane when:



- The rider is overtaking and passing another vehicle going in the same direction.
- **If the lane is marked and signed (as shown at right) for bicycle use only, drivers must NEVER use this lane as a turning lane, passing lane or for parking.**
- There are unsafe conditions in the roadway, such as parked cars, moving vehicles or machinery, fixed obstacles, pedestrians, animals, potholes or debris.
- The lane is too narrow for both a car and a bicycle to safely share the lane. In this case it is safest to let the bicycle take the full lane.

### **Safety Tips for Bicyclists**

Bicycles are the most vulnerable of all vehicles on the road. As a bicyclist riding in traffic or on the sidewalk, you should take extra precautions to protect yourself. Vehicles on the road, especially large trucks and buses, may not see you on your bike. Crossing the street or making a turn can be dangerous in traffic if others do not see you or your signals. The tips below can help keep you riding safely.

### **PROPER LIGHTING**

Tennessee law requires that a bicycle used at night must be equipped with a lamp on the front that emits a white light visible from a distance of at least 500 feet to the front and either a red reflector or lamp emitting a red light that is visible from a distance of 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of head lamps on a motor vehicle.

Consideration should also be given to placing reflective material on the frame of the bicycle to provide additional side and front visibility of the bicycle in low-light conditions. Riders are also encouraged to wear bright clothing with reflective material on both the helmet and clothing.

### **WEAR YOUR HELMET**

Before you get on your bike, put on a helmet. It is the best thing you can do to be safe. Bikes offer no protection in case of a crash, so you need to wear your protection. Wearing your helmet may save your life if you are hit by or run into a large truck or bus. Remember, riding into a truck is equivalent to hitting a steel wall. Your helmet is your life.

### **BIKERS BEWARE**

Always be aware of the traffic around you. This is especially important when riding in traffic with large trucks and buses. Trucks and buses make wide right turns. Never sneak in between a truck or bus and the curb or you could get crushed.

Never assume that all drivers see your hand signals or will yield for you. Assume you are invisible to other road users and ride defensively.

### **CHECK YOUR BRAKES**

Always check your brakes so that you are prepared to stop. Also remember that a truck requires more space to stop than you do on your bike. Never assume that a truck will be able to stop quickly if you get in the way. You may have to get out of the way to save your own life.

### **RIDE WITH TRAFFIC**

Avoiding a crash is the safest way to ride. Ride on the right side, with the flow of traffic. Riding against traffic may cause you to miss traffic control devices, such as traffic signs and stop lights. Be especially careful when riding near or around trucks and buses. Use caution and pay attention to trucks. Watch for their signals because the driver may not see you or be able to stop soon enough in an emergency situation. However, you should to be prepared in case the truck's signals don't work or the driver doesn't use them. That is why you, as the bicyclist, need to watch out for yourself. For a bike rider, the safest bet is to always be aware of the traffic around you.

### **BEWARE OF THE NO-ZONE**

Beware of riding too closely to a large truck. Large trucks have blind spots in the front, back and on the sides, which make it difficult for the driver to see around them. If you ride in these blind spots, truck drivers cannot see you and your chance for a crash are greatly increased.

### **To learn more specifics on bicycle riding and safety contact:**

The League of American Bicyclists  
1612 K Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20006  
202-822-1333

## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH MOTORCYCLES**

Research shows that two-thirds of car-motorcycle collisions are caused, not by the motorcyclist, but by the driver who turned in front of the motorcycle. The drivers didn't see the motorcycles at all or didn't see them until it was too late to avoid the collision.

### **Why Drivers Don't Always See Motorcyclists**

Drivers tend to look for other cars and trucks, not for motorcycles. The profile of a motorcycle is narrow and the body is short, making it harder to see and making it harder for a driver to estimate the cycle's distance and speed.

Motorcycle riding requires frequent lane movements to adjust to changing road and traffic conditions.

Motorcycles have the right to the use of the full lane. Riders need the lane's full width to respond to and handle hazards such as potholes, shifting traffic blocking them from being seen or strong winds or blasts of air from passing vehicles. You must never try to share a lane with a motorcycle, and you should always respect the cycle's space and position in traffic.

## Driver Tips for Sharing the Road with Motorcycles:

- **Passing-** Pass as you would pass a car, and don't pass too close or too fast as the blast of air can blow a motorcycle out of control.
- **Left turns-** Always signal your intention to turn. Watch for oncoming motorcycles.
- **Following Distance** - Allow at least a two-second following distance, so the motorcycle rider has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. Both cyclists and drivers are more likely to make bad decisions if there is not enough stopping distance or time to see and react to conditions.
- **Check your Blind Spots when Changing Lanes** - Motorcyclists riding alongside a lane of cars are often out of view of the driver. An unsuspecting driver may change lanes and clip or hit a motorcycle.
- **Anticipate Motorcyclists' Maneuvers** - A cyclists will change lane position to prepare for upcoming traffic conditions. Expect and allow room for the rider to adjust to road hazards that you can't see. At intersections, where most collisions and injuries occur, wait until the rider's intentions are absolutely clear (turning or going straight) before you move into the path of travel. Be even more careful in difficult driving conditions- rain, wet roads, ice and heavy winds- when the motorcyclist's braking and handling abilities are impaired.
- **Pay Extra Attention at Night** - You can easily misjudge distance because the single headlight or single tail light of a motorcycle can blend into the lights of other vehicles. Always dim your headlights as you would for other cars and trucks.
- **Drive Aware** - Whenever you are on the road or at an intersection with a motorcycle, use extra caution and care. Learn to watch for the narrow profile.

## Hazards that can affect Motorcyclists' Maneuvers:

Special conditions and situations may cause problems for motorcyclists which drivers need to anticipate. Drivers should be aware of these problems, so they can help share the road safely with motorcyclists. Here are a few examples:

- Bad weather and slippery surfaces cause greater problems for motorcyclists than for cars. The conditions create stability problems for all vehicles. Allow more following distance for cyclists when the road surface is wet and slippery. Also be alert to the problem of glare that rain and wet surfaces create, especially at night.
- Strong cross winds can move a cycle out of its lane of travel. Areas where this can happen are wide open, long stretches of highways and bridges. Large, fast-moving trucks sometimes create wind blasts which under certain conditions, can move the cyclists out of their path of travel.
- Railroad grade crossings are a particular hazard to

cyclists, and will usually cause them to slow down and possibly zigzag to cross the tracks.

- Metal or grated bridges cause a cycle to wobble much more than a car. An experienced cyclist slows down and moves to the center of the lane to allow room for handling the uneven surface. An inexperienced cyclist may become startled and try to quickly change direction. Be prepared for either reaction.
- Being aware of these situations and consciously looking out for motorcyclists can help you share the road safely.

## Safety Tips for Motorcycles

Among all motor vehicles, motorcycles are the most vulnerable on the road. Because motorcycles do not have safety belts, you can be thrown off your seat in a crash, which can result in serious injury or even death. Imagine your chance for survival if a truck strikes you, or if you strike it. Hitting a truck is like hitting a steel wall. However, your chance for survival will be increased if you wear a helmet and follow the safety tips below when riding your motorcycle.

## WATCH THE NO-ZONES

Never hang out in a truck's blind spot or "No-Zone." Trucks have large No-Zones on both sides, the front and behind the truck. Truck drivers cannot see you when you ride in these blind spots, which allows for a greater chance of a crash. The front blind spot is particularly dangerous if you need to stop quickly. Because of their lightweight and braking system, motorcycles can stop much faster than trucks. A truck may not be able to stop as quickly as you do, so you need to take special precautions to avoid crashes before they happen.

## ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET

Make sure to always wear a helmet. Beware of helmets that do not meet U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) standards. Check for the DOT label inside your helmet. Helmets are the most important piece of equipment you can wear when riding your motorcycle. A helmet could be your only source of protection in a serious crash.

## DRIVE TO SURVIVE

Motorcycles are the smallest vehicles on the road. Unfortunately they provide virtually no protection in a crash. Other drivers may not see you on your motorcycle, so you must be aware of everything on the road. Be extra cautious, paying attention to the signals and brake lights of other vehicles, especially trucks. However, you still need to be prepared in the event their signals or lights don't work. Ride with caution and drive defensively. Even though your motorcycle may be small, you must adhere to the laws of the road. Never ride in between lanes in traffic or share a lane with another vehicle. Don't instigate aggressive driving with other motorists; you will only increase your chance of a crash.

## CHECK YOURSELF AND YOUR BIKE

Conduct a safety inspection of your motorcycle before each ride, and wear protective clothing including gloves, boots and a jacket. Proper maintenance and protective clothing will help

reduce your chance of an crash or the severity of injury if you are involved in a crash, especially with a large truck or bus.

### **WATCH YOUR SPEED**

Of all vehicles, motorcycles accelerate the fastest, while trucks and buses are the slowest. Please watch your speed around trucks, especially in bad weather or at night. Colliding with the back of a car or truck will end your riding days.

**To learn more about motorcycle safety, pick up a copy of the Tennessee Motorcycle Operator Manual at any Driver License Service Center. Additional information and an electronic copy of this manual is available online at [www.tn.gov/safety](http://www.tn.gov/safety)**

### **SAFETY TIPS FOR CAR DRIVERS**

When driving on the highway you are at a serious disadvantage if involved in a crash with a larger vehicle. In crashes involving large trucks, the occupants of a car, usually the driver, sustain 78 percent of fatalities. In order to keep you and your family safe when driving around large trucks and buses, you should be extra cautious. Sharing the road with larger vehicles can be dangerous if you are not aware of their limitations. Here are a few tips to help you drive safer to prevent an accident and minimize injuries and fatalities if one does occur.

### **CUTTING IN FRONT CAN CUT YOUR LIFE SHORT**

If you cut in front of another vehicle, you may create an emergency-braking situation for the vehicles around you, especially in heavy traffic. Trucks and buses take much longer to stop in comparison to cars. If you force a larger vehicle to stop quickly this could cause a serious, even fatal accident. When passing, look for the front of the truck in your rear-view mirror before pulling in front and avoid braking situations!

### **BUCKLE YOUR BELTS**

Always buckle your safety belt. Safety belts are your best protection in case of a crash, especially if you get into an accident with a large vehicle such as a truck. Trucks require a greater stopping distance and can seriously hurt you if your car is struck from behind. However, your safety belt will keep you from striking the steering wheel or windshield, being thrown around, and from being ejected from the car. Wearing a safety belt is the single most important thing you can do to save your life, especially in a crash with a large truck.

### **WATCH YOUR BLIND SPOTS – THE “NO-ZONES”**

Large trucks have blind spots, or No-Zones, around the front, back and sides of the truck. Watch out! A truck could even turn into you, because these No-Zones make it difficult for the driver to see. So, don't hang out in the No-Zones, and remember, if you can't see the truck driver in the truck's mirror, the truck driver can't see you.

### **INATTENTIVE DRIVERS**

Inattentive drivers do not pay attention to driving or what is going on around them. They can be just as dangerous as

aggressive drivers when they drive slowly in the passing lane, ignore trucks brake lights or signals, and create an emergency-braking situation. They also create dangerous situations when they attempt to do other things while driving, such as using cell phones. When you are driving, please focus only on the road. If you need to attend to another matter while driving, safely pull over in a parking lot or rest stop.

### **AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS**

Aggressive drivers can be dangerous drivers. They put themselves and others at risk with their unsafe driving. Speeding, running red lights and stop signs, pulling in front of trucks too quickly when passing, and making frequent lane changes, especially in the blind spots of trucks, can create dangerous and potentially fatal situations on the road. These situations can lead to road rage not only for the aggressive driver, but also for others sharing the road.

### **AVOID SQUEEZE PLAY**

Be careful of trucks making wide right turns. If you try to get in between the truck and the curb, you'll be caught in a "squeeze" and can suffer a serious accident. Truck drivers sometimes need to swing wide to the left in order to safely negotiate a right turn especially in urban areas. They can't see cars directly behind or beside them. Cutting in between the truck and the curb increases the possibility of a crash. So pay attention to truck signals, and give them lots of room to maneuver.

### **NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE**

Drinking and driving don't mix. Alcohol affects a person's ability to make crucial driving decisions, such as braking, steering, or changing lanes. Remember, you are not the only one in danger when you decide to drink and then drive. You are sharing the road with everyone including large vehicles and your chances of getting into an accident are greatly increased. If you get into an accident with a truck, you're out of luck. The odds of surviving a serious accident with a large truck are too low. However, if you do live through it without serious injury, think of your higher insurance rates, your large legal fees, and other social and professional setbacks it will cause you. So think before you drink.

## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH LARGE TRUCKS AND BUSES**

You will always be sharing the road with trucks because they haul more freight more miles than any other form of transportation. Trucks are the sole method of delivery and pickup for approximately seventy-seven percent (77%) of America's communities.

A typical tractor-trailer combination, a loaded semi-trailer hinged and being pulled by tractor unit may weigh up to 80,000 pounds or 40 tons. Depending on the trailer length, the total length of the combination may exceed 70 feet.

The number of trucks that were involved in fatal accidents

nationally has increased by 3.2% percent from 2002 to 2006. When driving on a highway you are at a serious disadvantage if involved with a larger vehicle. In crashes involving large trucks, the occupants of a car, usually the driver, sustain 78% the fatalities.

Many truck-car crashes could be avoided if drivers know about truck (and bus) limitations and how to steer clear of unsafe situations involving large vehicles. Seems obvious, doesn't it? But the fact is that while most people realize it is more difficult to drive a truck than a car, many don't know exactly what a truck's limitations are in terms of maneuverability, stopping distances, and blind-spots. Remember: Large trucks, recreational vehicles and buses are not simply big cars. The bigger they are:

1. The bigger their blind spots. Trucks have deep blind spots in front, behind and on both sides. Make sure you position your vehicle so that the driver of the truck can see you in the side mirrors of his truck.
2. The longer it takes trucks to stop. A car traveling at 55 MPH can stop in 240 feet however a truck traveling at the same speed of 55 MPH, takes about 450+ feet to stop.
3. The more room they need to maneuver, such as making right turns. Trucks must swing wide to the left to safely negotiate a right turn. They cannot see motorcycles or cars behind or beside them.
4. The longer it takes an automobile or motorcycle to pass them.
5. As stated above, the more likely you are to be the "loser" in a collision.

Truck drivers are always watching for automobiles and smaller vehicles and working to avoid collisions. There are some techniques that you can use to help them and yourself share the road safely and reduce the likelihood of a collision with a large vehicle.

Do NOT enter a roadway in front of a large vehicle. A truck or bus cannot slow down or stop as quickly as an automobile. By pulling out in front of these vehicles, you could easily cause a rear-end collision.

Do NOT drive directly behind a truck or bus. Keep a reasonable distance between your vehicle and the large vehicle ahead. This gives you a better view of the road to anticipate problems, and you will give yourself room for an emergency "out".

Do NOT cut abruptly in front of a large vehicle. If you are exiting, it will only take a few extra seconds to slow down and exit behind the truck. Cutting off a large vehicle on the interstate is particularly dangerous because of the high speeds being traveled.

When passing a large vehicle, do NOT pull back over into the

lane in front of the truck unless you can see the whole front of the vehicle in your rearview mirror. Complete your pass as quickly as possible and don't stay alongside the truck. Do NOT slow down once you are in front of the truck.

Position your vehicle so you are outside the truck driver's "blind spots", and be sure the truck driver can see YOU in the side rearview mirror. **If you can't see the truck's mirror, the driver cannot see YOU.** A truck's blind spots are immediate in front, on either side of the car and up to 200 feet in the rear. A trucker may not be able to see the road directly in front of the cab. If the tractor has a long hood, the trucker may not be able to see the first 10-20 feet in front of the bumper, plenty of room for a motorcycle or car to slip unnoticed into a dangerous position.

If you are stopped behind a truck on an uphill grade, stay to the left in your lane so the driver can see you. When stopped in a traffic lane, leave extra space in front of your car in case the truck rolls back when it starts to move.

Pay close attention to the large vehicle's turn signals. Trucks make wide right turns that require them to swing to the left before turning right. Always make sure you know which way the vehicle is turning before trying to pass.

Do not linger beside a large vehicle because you may not be visible to the driver in the wide area the truck needs for maneuvering a turn.

When you are near a Commercial Vehicle Weigh Station, avoid driving in the right lane so slow-moving trucks can easily merge back onto the roadway.

Dim your lights at night. Bright lights reflected in the mirrors can blind the driver.

Never underestimate the size and speed of approaching trucks and buses. Because of their large size they often appear to be traveling more slowly than their actual speed.

### **Risky Situations with Large Vehicles**

**Passing a Large Vehicle:** A tractor-trailer or other combination vehicles take a longer time and requires more space to get around than a car.

- On a two-way road, leave yourself more time and space when passing these large vehicles. Check to your front and rear and move into the passing lane only if it is clear and you are in a legal passing zone.
- If the truck or bus driver blink their vehicle headlights after you pass, it's a signal that you are cleared to pull back in front of their vehicle. Move back only when you can see the front of the truck in your rearview mirror.
- Remember that on an upgrade or steep hill, a large vehicle usually loses speed.
- Because of their weight, trucks travel faster downhill and

you may have to increase your speed to pass a truck on a downhill grade. Complete your pass as quickly as possible and don't stay alongside the truck. After you pass, maintain your speed. Don't pass a truck, then slow down, making the truck driver brake while traveling downhill.

- When a truck passes you, you can help the driver by keeping to the far side of your lane and reducing your speed slightly. NEVER SPEED UP AS A TRUCK OR BUS IS PASSING.
- When you meet a truck/bus coming from the opposite direction, keep as far as possible to the right of the road to avoid being sideswiped and to reduce wind turbulence between vehicles. The turbulence PUSHES vehicles APART. It does NOT suck them together.

**The “Right Turn Squeeze”:** Trucks make wide right turns and often must leave an open space on the right side. Do NOT move into that space or try to pass a truck if it might be making a right turn. If you are between the truck and the curb, the driver may not be able to see you and your car can be crunched or sideswiped by the truck's trailer.

**A Truck Backing Up:** When a truck is trying to back into a loading dock, there may be no choice except to block the roadway for a short time. Never try to cross behind a truck when it is preparing to back up. This is a high-collision situation because you will be in the driver's blind spots. Give the driver plenty of room and wait patiently for the few minutes it takes to complete the maneuver.

**Maintaining a Safety Cushion with Large Vehicles:** As stated previously, trucks and buses need more maneuvering room and stopping distance than small vehicles. A good safety strategy is to leave plenty of space between your vehicle and the larger vehicle, especially in these situations:

If you are driving in front of a truck, keep your speed up so you maintain a safe distance in front of the truck. Always indicate your intention to turn or change lanes early enough for the driver of the truck or bus to prepare for your maneuver. Avoid sudden moves, slow downs or stops.

Don't cut in front of a truck or bus. You can remove the driver's cushion of safety.

When following a truck or bus, it is a good idea to add more following distance.

If rain or water is standing on the road, spray from a truck passing you, or the truck you are trying to pass, will seriously reduce your vision. You should move as far away from the truck as you can, while staying in your lane.

Don't drive too close to trucks that are transporting hazardous materials, since they make frequent stops, such as railroad crossings.

**Hills or Mountain Roads:** Beware of dangers caused by slower moving trucks or buses on steep hills, inclines, or mountain roads. Watch for slow moving trucks or buses going both up and down hills. Heavy vehicles cannot maintain speed when climbing hills and must go slowly down hills to stay under control. Watch for trucks or buses that might be in trouble. Smoking wheels or a high speed can be a sign of brake loss. If you encounter this situation, fall back and DO NOT pass.

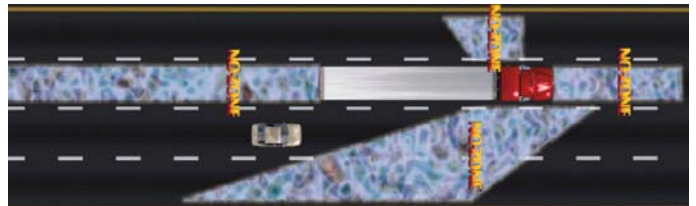
**Runaway Truck Ramps:** These ramps are designed to stop out-of-control trucks or buses going down steep downgrades. Vehicles should never stop or park in these areas.

### Learn the “NO-ZONES” for large vehicles:

Many motorists falsely assume that trucks and buses can see the road better because they sit twice as high as the driver of a small vehicle. While trucks and buses do enjoy a better forward view and have bigger mirrors, they have serious blind spots into which a small vehicle can disappear from view.

The NO-ZONE represents danger areas around trucks and buses where crashes are more likely to occur.

1. The area approximately up to 20 feet directly in front of a large vehicle is considered a NO-ZONE. When small vehicles cut in too soon after passing or changing lanes, then abruptly slow down, trucks and buses are forced to compensate with very little room or time to spare.
2. Unlike small vehicles, trucks and buses have deep blind spots directly behind them. Avoid following too closely in this NO-ZONE. If you stay in the rear blind spot of a large vehicle, you increase the possibility of a traffic crash. The driver of the bus or truck cannot see your motorcycle or car and your view of the traffic ahead will be severely reduced.
3. Large vehicles have much larger blind spots on both sides than cars do. When you drive in these blind spots for any length of time, the vehicle's driver cannot see you. When passing, even if the vehicle's driver knows you are there, remaining alongside a large vehicle too long makes it impossible for the driver to take evasive action if an obstacle appears in the roadway ahead.
4. Truck and bus drivers often cannot see vehicles directly behind or beside them when they are attempting to safely negotiate a right turn. If you cut in between the truck or bus and the curb or shoulder to the right, it greatly increases the possibility of a crash in this “right turn squeeze”.



**OVERHEAD VIEW OF “NO-ZONE” AREAS**

## SHARING THE ROAD WITH SCHOOL BUSES

School buses are one of the safest forms of transportation in the nation-nearly 2,000 times safer than the family car.

Crashes are rare because school systems and the school bus contractors work hard to train drivers to avoid crashes. The reality of school bus safety is that more children are hurt outside a bus than inside one. **Children are at greatest risk when they are getting on or off the school bus.** Most of the children killed in bus related crashes are pedestrians, five to seven years old; they are hit by the bus or by motorists illegally passing a stopped school bus.

In fact pedestrian fatalities while loading and unloading school buses account for nearly three out of every four fatalities. The child who bends over to retrieve a dropped school paper, or who walks too close to the bus while crossing the street, needs to be aware that every school bus is surrounded by a danger zone.

This Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the school bus and NEVER go behind the bus.

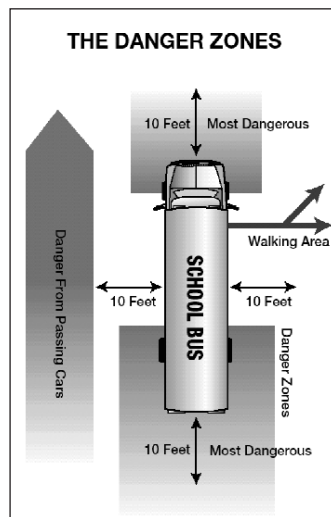
In many of our school systems, children are taught to escape that zone by taking five giant steps as soon as they exit the bus. If they must cross the street after exiting the bus, they are taught to cross at least five giant steps in front of the bus-and to be sure they're able to be seen by the school bus driver and can maintain eye contact with the driver.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to teach children, especially young children, is not to go back to pick up items they've dropped near the bus, or left on the bus.

**Parents and other adults must also do their part. For instance, most drivers need to learn to share the road with school buses and stop when the bus stops to take on or let off passengers.** If we all do our part- if drivers heed school bus warning lights, bus drivers drive defensively, parents help their children learn to ride safely and children learn to avoid the bus' danger zone- it can be safer still to ride to and from school in that yellow bus.

### Safety Tips for Drivers

Drivers must be familiar with the Danger Zone. Since children are taught to take the "five giant steps" from the school bus for safety, drivers must ensure that they stop far enough from the bus to allow for this needed safety space.



## SHARING THE ROAD WITH SLOW MOVING VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Certain slow-moving farm vehicles, construction equipment and vehicles drawn by animals may share our roadways. Use caution and prepare to slow down when approaching and passing slow-moving vehicles from the rear.

Be alert for slow-moving vehicles, especially in rural areas.

Driving on empty rural highways can be just as dangerous as driving in heavy city traffic. It is easy to relax your attention...and suddenly come upon a dangerous surprise.

Animals in the road, farm equipment moving from one field to another, horse drawn vehicles just over the crest of a hill, or a low spot covered with water are not unusual hazards in rural driving.

Stay alert, watch for warning signs, and slow down when approaching curves or hills that block your view of the roadway ahead. The "slow moving vehicle" emblem, a fluorescent or reflective orange triangle, must be displayed on the rear of vehicles drawn by animals, and most farm vehicles and construction equipment.

**Farm Machinery:** Watch for tractors, combines, and other farm equipment moving across the road and traveling on state highways in rural areas. This type of equipment can be very large and wide enough to take up more than one traffic lane. Farm machinery usually does not have turn signals and to make a right turn, operators of farm machinery may first pull wide to the left, then turn to the right. In most cases, these vehicles will be traveling at less than 25 M.P.H. Coming over the top of a hill at 55 M.P.H. to find a large slow-moving tractor in front of you is a frightening and dangerous experience. Expect the unexpected and be prepared to protect yourself and your passengers.

**Horse Drawn Carriages:** In some areas of Tennessee you may be sharing the road with animal-drawn vehicles. They have the same rights to use the road as a motor vehicle and must follow the same rules of the road. They are subject to heavy damage and injury to the occupants if hit by a car. Warning signs will be posted in areas where you are likely to find animal-drawn vehicles. **Be Alert!**

**Horseback Riders:** Horseback riders are subject to, and protected by, the rules of the road. They also must ride single file near the right curb or road edge, or on a usable right shoulder, lane or path. The law requires you to exercise due care when approaching a horse being ridden or led along a road. Areas where horseback riding is common will usually be marked with an advisory sign. You must drive at a reasonable speed, and at a reasonable distance away from the horse. Do NOT sound your horn or "rev" your engine loudly when approaching or passing a horse.

### Closing Speeds

Normal speeds for slow-moving vehicles may range from 5 to 20 mph. When a vehicle traveling at normal highway speed

approaches a slow-moving vehicle from the rear, the speed differential will dramatically shorten the time it takes to reach the slow-moving vehicle.

### Turns and Passing

Slow-moving vehicles may make wide turns and may turn right or left at any time into unmarked entrances. When approaching from the rear, stay a safe distance behind the vehicle until it is safe to pass, then be certain the driver has seen you and is aware of your intent to pass before you begin.

When lights are required for these slow moving vehicles, a self-luminous red lamp on the rear of the vehicle is normally visible for 500 feet to the rear. Other devices to identify slow-moving vehicles may include slow moving emblem reflectors, as well as rotating or oscillating red or amber lights. You may see this on slow-moving vehicles such as farm tractors, machinery, construction equipment or horse-drawn vehicles.

### Lane Usage

Slower traffic must drive in the right-hand lane. The left lane is for passing and turning. Slow-moving vehicles may be wider than the lane width. It may be necessary for these wide vehicles to temporarily move into an adjoining lane to avoid roadside obstructions.

## SHARING THE ROAD WITH HIGHWAY WORK ZONES

### Work Zone Safety: It's Everybody's Business

Work zones on U.S. highways have become increasingly dangerous places for both workers and travelers, with the death rate approaching two per day. Approximately 40,000 people per year are injured as a result of crashes in work zones. With more than 70,000 work zones in place across America on a given day, highway agencies are realizing that it is not enough to focus on improving the devices used in the work zone areas, but that they must also reach out to the public in order to change the behavior of drivers so that crashes can be prevented.

**What is a Work Zone?** A work zone is any type of road work that may impede traffic conditions. Many work zones involve lane closures. They may also be on the shoulder or in the median. Moving work zones such as sweepers, line painting trucks, or mowing equipment and workers are also quite common.

Highway work zones are set up according to the type of road and the work to be done on the road. There are a number of events that make up a work zone. They can be long-term projects of short term actions. A work zone can also exist at anytime of the year. The common theme among work zones is the color orange. Work zone materials such as cones, barrels, signs, large vehicles, or orange vests on workers give you an indication that you are either approaching a work zone or are already in a work zone. In these work zones, workers will

normally be wearing bright yellow-green apparel such as shirts, vests or hardhats to ensure they are highly visible.

What do you do when approaching a Work Zone? Watch for the color orange – it always means: “road work—slow down”. All temporary signs in work zones have an orange background and black letters or symbols. These signs will be found on the right side of the road, or on both left and right sides when the roadway is a divided highway, and they will tell you what (one lane traffic, uneven lanes, etc.) and how soon (miles or feet ahead) you will encounter the work zone. Most work zones also have signs alerting you to reductions in the speed limit through the work zone.

These speed reductions are necessary for the safety of the workers and motorists. The reduced speed limits are clearly posted within the work zone and if there are no reduced speed limit postings, drivers should obey the normal posted speed limit. Under Tennessee law, speed violations that occur in the work zones where the speed has been reduced and where employees of the Department of Transportation as well as other construction workers are present, will result in a fine up to a maximum of \$500 dollars. What should you do when driving through Work Zones? Signing, traffic control devices, roadway markings, flaggers, and law enforcement officers are used to protect highway workers and to direct drivers safely through work zones or along carefully marked detours. As a driver you should learn and abide by the following safety tips for driving in work zones:

### *Slow down and pay full attention to the driving situation!*

Drive within the posted speed limits, which are usually reduced in work zones. If you don't, you'll pay the price. A car traveling 60 M.P.H. travels 88 feet per second. If you see a sign that says “Road Work 1500 Feet”, you'll be in that construction zone in 17 seconds!

**Obey the posted speed limits** which are usually reduced in work zones. Workers could be present just a few feet away. If you don't, you'll pay the price.

**Merge as soon as possible.** Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by moving to the appropriate lane at first notice of an approaching work zone. You can be ticketed and the cause of an accident for being a last chance merger.

**Use total concentration** when driving through work zones. Pay attention to your surroundings. This is not the time to use the cellular phone, look for a new CD, change the radio station, read the paper, apply make-up, shave, eat or drink or fill out the expense report.

**Keep your ears open!** Do not wear earphones while driving. Turn your lights on before you enter the zone! Turn on your vehicle's headlights to become more visible to workers and other motorists.

**Follow the instructions** on the road work zone warning signs and those given by flaggers. Follow their signals, and don't change lanes within the work zone unless instructed to do so.

**Expect the unexpected! Avoid complacency.** Work zones change constantly. Don't become oblivious to work zone signs when the work is long term or widespread.

**Use extreme caution** when driving through a work zone at night whether workers are present or not.

**Calm down.** Work zones aren't there to personally inconvenience you. They're there to improve the roads for everyone and improve your future ride.

**Watch the traffic around you,** and be prepared to react to what the traffic is doing. Check the taillights/brake lights of vehicles ahead of you for indications of what is happening on the road ahead. Be ready to respond quickly.

**Adjust your lane position** away from where the side workers and equipment are located when possible.

**Keep a safe distance** between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers. **Don't tailgate!** Most work zone accidents are caused by rear-end collisions.

Some work zones – like line painting, road patching and mowing – are mobile. Just because you don't see the workers immediately after you see the warning signs doesn't mean they're not out there. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says "End Road Work".

**Expect delays;** plan for them and leave early to reach your destination on time.

**Avoid road work zones** altogether by using alternate routes, when you can.

## SHARING THE ROAD WITH TRAINS

Actually, you don't share the road with trains—you stop and let them have the right-of-way! You can stop your car suddenly but a train can't. **Drivers must ALWAYS yield the right of way to trains because IT'S THE LAW.**

The average car weighs 3,000 pounds and the average loaded train weighs 12 million pounds!

A train traveling at 55 miles per hour takes a full mile to stop. You are 30 times more likely to die in a collision with a train than with a car or even a large truck or bus.

Over half of the train collisions with cars in America happen at crossroads with lights, bells, or gates and two-thirds of the crashes happen in full daylight. Why?

**Impatience** - Drivers don't want to wait the 30 seconds to 2 minutes average time it takes for the train to pass through the intersection. They try to beat the train.

**Negligence** - When drivers see a railroad crossing sign or

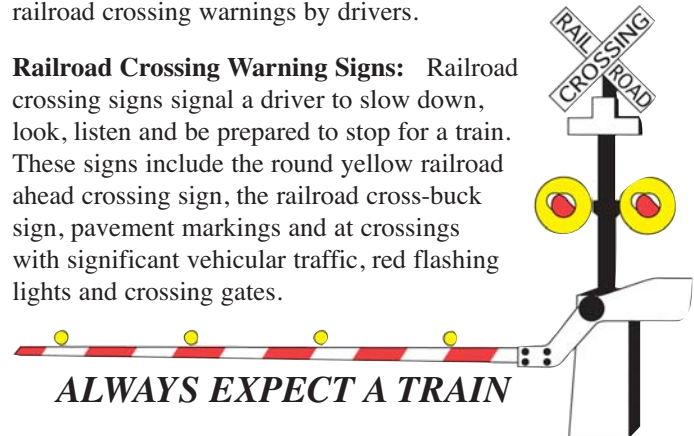
warning, they don't respect the potential for danger; they cross the tracks without looking, listening, or stopping. Most of the collisions occur within 25 miles of the driver's home, suggesting that drivers KNEW the tracks were there and they were in the habit of crossing without looking.

**If you are on a collision course with a train, only you can avoid the collision. The train cannot stop in time or swerve to avoid you.**

### Stopping for Railroad Crossings

Countless people lose their lives or suffer tragic injuries due to train/vehicle collisions. Invariably, the cause of these collisions is the disregard, and often willful evasion, of railroad crossing warnings by drivers.

**Railroad Crossing Warning Signs:** Railroad crossing signs signal a driver to slow down, look, listen and be prepared to stop for a train. These signs include the round yellow railroad ahead crossing sign, the railroad cross-buck sign, pavement markings and at crossings with significant vehicular traffic, red flashing lights and crossing gates.



**Railroad Crossing Stop Signs:** If you approach a railroad crossing at which a stop sign is posted, you must come to a complete stop and proceed across the tracks only after looking both ways to make sure a train is not approaching. Never assume the track is not used or a train is not approaching.

### Safety Guidelines for Railroad Crossings:

**Obey the Warning Signs:** Look both ways and LISTEN, because you may have to stop. Expect a train on any track at any time. Don't trust a "schedule" because trains can cross at any time of the day or night. Due to the size of trains, the actual speed of a train can be very deceiving.

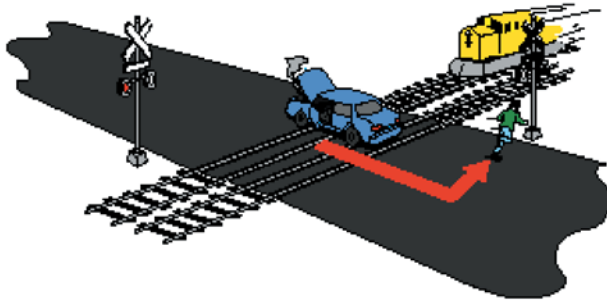
**Don't Attempt to "Beat the Train":** Under no circumstances attempt to race a train to a crossing. If you lose, you will never race again.

**Don't Try to "Evade the Gates":** Never drive around a crossing gate that has extended down. If the gates are down, stop and stay in place. It's against the law to drive through lowered gates. Don't cross the tracks until the gates are fully raised and the lights have stopped flashing.

**When Approaching a Railroad Crossing:** Slow down far enough ahead of the crossing to be certain that you can stop when you reach the point where a train could first be seen. Railroad crossings equipped with electric or mechanical signal devices require the operator to bring the vehicle to a complete stop within 50 feet, and no closer than 15 feet from the nearest rail and shall not proceed until it is safe.

**Avoid Stopping on the Railroad Tracks:** Never proceed to cross the tracks unless you can legally clear all tracks without stopping. If you are crossing the tracks and the warning lights begin flashing or the gates start coming down, don't stop. **KEEP MOVING!** The warning signals will allow enough time for you to finish driving through the crossing before the train arrives. The gate on the far side of the tracks will not block you in. **DO NOT EVER TRY TO BACK UP.**

**If your vehicle stalls on the tracks,** all occupants should exit the vehicle immediately and get off the tracks. If a train is coming, get away from the tracks and run toward the direction from which the train is coming. This allows you to be away from and behind the point of impact, to prevent injury. (See the illustration immediately below). If no train is in sight, post lookouts and try to start the vehicle or push it off the tracks. If you are alone, exit the vehicle and notify local law enforcement for assistance. Look to see that no train is approaching the crossing and carefully proceed to have the vehicle removed from the tracks.

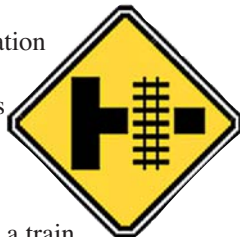


**Your vehicle is replaceable. You are not!  
No Vehicle is worth a human life.**

**Watch for Additional Trains:** Where there is more than one track, a driver waiting for one train to pass must make sure another train is not approaching from the opposite direction. Once the first train has cleared the tracks, caution should be taken that a second train is NOT proceeding in the opposite direction. Don't go across the tracks until you are sure that no other trains are coming on another track from either direction.

**Watch for Vehicles that Must Stop at Highway-Railway Crossings:** School Buses, Passenger Buses and Trucks carrying hazardous materials must stop at all crossings whether signals are activated to not. Never attempt to pass these stopped vehicles on a two-way road. For safety's sake do NOT pass such stopped vehicles on a multi-lane roadway unless the crossing is clearly marked with signal lights and/or gates that are NOT activated. Otherwise the stopped vehicle in the right lane may block your clear view of the tracks.

**Intersection Warning Signs;** Some variation of the sign shown on the right will be posted prior to intersections or crossroads where railroad tracks cross one of the roadways. Always be alert and pay attention to these signs as they give you advance warning that you may encounter a train



if turning onto the road indicated in the sign.  
For more information on Railroad Crossing Safety contact:

**Operation Lifesaver of Tennessee**  
**101 Gillespie Drive #11108**  
**Franklin, Tennessee 37067**  
[www.tnol.org](http://www.tnol.org)

or

**Federal Railroad Administration**  
**Office of Public Affairs (Stop 5)**  
**1120 Vermont Ave., NW**  
**Washington, DC 20590**  
[www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov)

## **SAFETY TIPS FOR 15-PASSENGER VANS**

The following safety tips will help prevent crashes, including rollover crashes in 15-passenger vans, as well as protect you in case an unavoidable crash does occur.

### **Safety Restraints**

All occupants in 15-passenger vans must wear safety belts at all times. This is the law in Tennessee, as well as many other states. As stated previously, NHTSA estimates that 80 percent of 15-passenger van fatalities were not properly restrained at the time of the crash. Our research shows that 195 people were killed in 15-passenger vans in Tennessee between 1994 and 2007, and of the 181 people with known restraint usage, 138 (76%) were not restrained. With this proportion, we can estimate that 105 lives may have been saved if everyone had been properly restrained.

### **Tire Pressure**

Tires need to be inspected and tire pressure checked every time the van is used. Excessively worn or improperly inflated tires can lead to a loss of control situation and rollover. Tread should be checked to insure there is enough grip, and to make sure there are no signs of tread separation. Also important to note is that many of these vans have extremely different tire pressure recommendations for front versus rear tires. Under-inflation of the rear tires (especially the left rear) is a major cause of tread separation.

### **Driver**

Anyone who operates a 15-passenger van should be trained and experienced, since these machines react much differently than passenger cars. There are no special endorsements or licenses needed to operate a 15-passenger van in the State of Tennessee. Just as important as experience, is attention. Drivers should be well-rested and should not use cell phones or other handheld devices, so they maintain focus on the road. These vehicles require longer stopping distances and do not turn as easily as passenger cars. As with all vehicles, drugs and alcohol should not be used by the driver. Since these vans are bigger and it is often more difficult to see other traffic, it may be a good idea to use an occupant as a spotter. Nearly 70% of the fatal 15-passenger van crashes in Tennessee involved two or more vehicles.

### **Check the Load**

Have passengers sit as far towards the front of the vehicle as possible. With most 15-passenger vans, the rear seat is located behind the rear axle. This causes an uneven weight distribution, pushing the center of gravity (CG) further back. Do not tow any trailers or put cargo on the roof of the van. These actions also impact the CG, increasing chances of rollover.

### **Avoid Conditions that Lead to Loss of Control**

This is even more important in 15-passenger vans than any other vehicle. Most rollovers occur at high speeds as a result of sudden steering maneuvers. Caution should be used on interstates and state highways to avoid running off the road. If the van's tires should drop off the roadway, gradually slow down and steer back on to the roadway when it is safe to do so.

## **SAFETY TIPS FOR RECREATIONAL VEHICLES (RVs)**

Recreational vehicles (RVs) can be a great way to travel across the country. However, to be safe you need to know about safe operation and maintenance. RVs are very different from cars and because of their size; they handle more like a large truck. This also means RVs have some real limitations. In order to keep your friends and family safe on your next trip, make sure to read these tips below, and enjoy the view.

### **WATCH YOUR BLIND SPOTS - THE "NO-ZONES"**

RVs are large and have many blind spots. Learning to use your mirrors and signals properly can help prevent serious accidents. Your mirrors are very important, but they do not allow you to see everything on the road, so always be aware. In addition, trucks have even larger blind spots, and may not see you; be ready to respond defensively to dangerous situations.

### **PREPARE TO STOP**

RVs are similar to trucks in that they are heavier than cars, and require a longer stopping distance. Pay attention to traffic and to other vehicle's brake lights. Always keep enough room between your RV and the vehicle in front of you. This will help prevent accidents in case of an emergency braking situation. Driving at a safe speed will also ensure your safety in the event of any sudden stops.

### **CHECK YOUR TIRES**

Maintaining proper tire pressure, inspecting tires regularly, avoiding excess loading, and driving at a safe speed, can help prevent tire problems. Before each trip, make sure you check to see if your tires are properly inflated. Maintaining the correct air pressure and tread depth will ensure their longevity and your safety.

### **WATCH YOUR WEIGHT**

Weight distribution is very important in maintaining the proper

center of gravity in a RV. Be sure to secure all heavy items. They can shift during travel and may affect handling, ride quality and braking. Distributing the weight closer to the ground and equal on both sides keeps the center of gravity low and will provide better handling of your RV.

### **WEAR YOUR SAFETY BELT**

Always wear your safety belt. Make sure all passengers in your RV wear safety belts whenever the vehicle is in motion. In case of an accident or sudden stop, passengers who are not buckled in may be thrown around and seriously injured.