

KENTUCKY HAZ ALERT

To prevent semi truck rollovers, employers should:

- Implement and enforce a seat belt safety program
- Establish and strengthen a company policy to reduce fatigue on the job

Employees should:

- Always wear a seat belt while in the vehicle
- Use correct lights during a fog
- Use proper precautions to reduce sloshing
- Reduce inadequate evasive actions

SEMI DRIVERS KILLED AFTER VEHICLE ROLLOVERS

From January 2010 through April 2010, two semi truck drivers were killed as a direct result of vehicle rollovers. Following are the case descriptions for the two driver deaths:



Case 1: A 55-year-old male semi truck driver who worked for a local trucking company hauling 8,700 gallons of gasoline was fatally injured. For unknown reasons, his vehicle left the southbound road and overturned in the median at approximately 4 a.m. The victim, who did not wear a seat belt, was ejected from the cab and run over by an SUV in the northbound lane. The driver was declared dead at the scene and died from multiple blunt force trauma. The highway speed limit was 70 mph and the driver's estimated speed was unknown at the time of the crash.

Case 2: A 46-year-old male semi truck driver, who was hauling milk and worked for a local trucking company, died after his vehicle failed to negotiate a curve, rolling over in field. The time of the incident was 5 a.m. Dense fog may have been a contributing factor. The semi truck driver was not wearing his seat belt. The driver was crushed in the cab of the semi, and was dead at the scene. The speed limit for the curve was 45 mph. The driver's estimated speed was unknown at the time of the crash, and there was no indication of braking.

ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT WHILE IN THE VEHICLE.

A SEAT BELT SAFETY PROGRAM SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED AND ENFORCED

Commercial vehicle carriers should implement and enforce a workplace policy that requires drivers to wear seat belts while operating a commercial vehicle.

DRIVERS SHOULD USE PROPER PRECAUTIONS TO REDUCE SLOSHING

When liquid inside a tanker starts to move sideways, this phenomena is called “sloshing”. If sloshing occurs too vigorously, it can result in a rollover. Sloshing and surge are caused by excessive speed, narrow turning radius, moving too quickly, shifting or missing a shift on a curve. Partial loads can be a contributing factor to sloshing, as there is more room for the liquid to move. To help reduce surge, reduce speed (particularly taking into account weather and road conditions), avoid quick movements by being vigilant, reduce speed for a greater turning radius, and exercise caution while shifting on a curve.

A COMPANY SAFETY POLICY TO REDUCE FATIGUE ON THE JOB SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED OR STRENGTHENED

Drivers should be educated to recognize fatigue while driving. According to an article, “Driver Fatigue: The Dangers of Driving Sleepy”, signs of driver fatigue include daydreaming, straying out of the lane, excessive yawning, feeling impatient, stiff, heavy eyes, and reacting slowly. Methods to avoid driver fatigue include being rested, getting enough sleep, taking breaks every two hours where the driver may take a nap, eating a snack, avoiding consumption of alcohol, having a trip driving plan, and staying hydrated.

A COMPANY SAFETY POLICY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED FOR DRIVING IN FOG CONDITIONS

If you use your headlights in a fog, the light is scattered, revealing the small particles of moisture. Some of the light is refracted back to the driver. When using high beams, a greater amount of light is refracted toward the driver, making it more difficult to see. Fog lights are more effective and safer to use in fog. A driver should never “overdrive” their headlights (driving so fast that your stopping distance is farther than you can see with your headlights). When in doubt of the best rate of speed, err on the side of caution. Always clean your headlights before a trip.

A COMPANY SAFETY POLICY TO REDUCE INADEQUATE EVASIVE ACTIONS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED

A company safety policy on adequate evasive actions should include visual scanning of the roadway in front for brake lights on slowing vehicles so that steering and braking can be maximized to avoid jack-knifing and overturning. Braking should be spread over the longest distance possible. Drivers should avoid quick braking and swerving during evasive actions. If possible, the truck driver should brake first, release the brakes, swerve, and then reapply the brakes. When the tractor is skidding, the truck driver should release the brakes and steer into the skid before the skid causes the truck to jackknife. In addition, truckers should be on guard for other trucks or vehicles sitting or moving in emergency lanes, and the posted speed limit should be followed.

For more information, contact:

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References:

1. URL: www.fmcsa.dot.gov

The KY FACE program is an occupational fatality program at KIPRC funded by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (Cooperative Agreement No.: 5 U60 OH008483-06.