



TOW TRUCK DRIVERS STRUCK BY VEHICLES

Recommendations for Employers:

- **Prohibit working on the traffic-facing side of the vehicle:** Implement policies that require operators to perform tasks from the side of the tow truck opposite of traffic.
- **Provide comprehensive training for tow operators:** Offer training covering proper loading and unloading procedures, equipment inspection and operation, hazard recognition and response, correct use of personal protective equipment, and safe roadside procedures.
- **Enhance visibility with high-visibility apparel, vehicle lighting, and portable warning devices:** Incorporate ANSI Class 3 high-visibility clothing and vehicles equipped with LED light bars and strobes that provide 360-degree visibility to alert oncoming traffic.
- **Ensure tow operators work with law enforcement to secure the loading area:** When working in situations where the shoulder is narrow or there are additional hazards or weather-related concerns, law enforcement should be present and at minimum engage their light bar for the entire duration of the loading procedure.

What Is the Hazard?

Roadside assistance workers, including tow truck drivers, face a high risk of injury or death when operating near moving traffic. Distracted driving and failure to observe roadside safety laws put these workers at risk every day.

According to the AAA Foundation, 123 roadside assistance workers were fatally struck in the United States between 2015-2021. The number of yearly fatalities increased over time, from 10 in 2015 to 26 in 2021.¹ In Kentucky, five tow truck operators have been struck by vehicles and killed during the past decade.²

Examples of tow truck driver deaths that occurred in Kentucky:

Case 1: A 78-year-old tow truck driver was discovered in the westbound lane on an interstate. A preliminary investigation determined that the tow truck driver exited the vehicle after pulling over to the shoulder. While retrieving a tool from the driver's side compartment, the victim was struck by an unidentified vehicle. The victim was not towing a load at the time of the incident. (2025)

Case 2: A 54-year-old tow truck driver was fatally struck by a passing semi-truck while working on the shoulder of a major interstate in Kentucky. The driver was securing a vehicle on the back of his rollback tow truck and was attempting to step down from the tilted platform on the traffic-facing side, when he was hit. (2024) [Read the full report](#)

Case 3: A 42-year-old tow truck driver loaded a disabled truck onto his rollback tow truck on the southbound shoulder of a four lane, undivided highway. As the victim was entering the tow truck cab on the traffic-facing side of the truck, a van swerved into the emergency lane and struck him, causing fatal injuries. (2016) [Read the full report](#)

RESOURCES

Name of Resource	Resource Description	Resource Link
A Tow Truck Operator Dies on a Highway When He Is Struck by a Car While Loading a Vehicle onto a Tow Truck – California	Investigative report detailing an incident in which a tow truck operator was struck by a motorist while loading a disabled vehicle onto his tow truck while parked in a triangular gore on a highway.	https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/PHP/DEODC/OHB/FACE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/23CA004.pdf
Kentucky Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Responder Training	Training program that focuses on response efforts that protect motorists and responders while minimizing the impact on traffic flow. TIM training includes detecting, verifying, and responding to incidents; clearing the incident scene; and restoring traffic flow.	https://kyt2.uky.edu/training/traffic-incident-management-responder-training
Tow Truck Driver Safety Tips - Wayne's Towing	Article listing the everyday risks tow drivers face and best practices to stay safe during operations.	https://waynes-towing.com/is-tow-truck-driving-dangerous/

SOURCES

1. Roadside Assistance Providers Fatally Struck by Vehicles at the Roadside: Incidence and Characteristics. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. (2024). <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/202401-AAAFTS-Roadside-Responder-Fatalities.pdf#:~:text=The%20study%20identified%20123%20roadside%20assistance%20providers,year%20of%20nation.>
2. Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation program. (2025). Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center.



CONTACT KOSHS

Kentucky Occupational Safety & Health Surveillance Program
 2365 Harrodsburg Road, Suite B475
 Lexington, Kentucky 40504
 (859) 323-4750 office
 (859) 218-8924 fax
kyfaceprogram@uky.edu
 Join our mailing list: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/R3mbvy7>



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