

Safety Memo For: Motorcoach Drivers

FOLLOWING DISTANCES

Some drivers are downright OFFENSIVE. They drive automobiles, pick-ups, motorcoaches, school buses and trucks. They cut in too soon when passing, fail to signal intentions, break the speed limits and TAILGATE.

The picture - a motorcoach is traveling at about 40 mph on the inside lane of a four lane boulevard. There are left turn lanes at each intersection. The coach driver intends to turn left several blocks beyond the next light. He is following a furniture van at about fifty feet (less than two coach lengths) in the left through lane.

The unexpected - something happens in front of the furniture van causing him to hit the brakes. The coach driver is following too close to see what is happening ahead of the furniture truck. There is traffic in the right lane - can't move right. He will rear end the furniture van for sure unless he swings left into the turning lane - NOW.

Bad decision - there are several cars waiting in the left turn lane. The coach clips the left rear of the furniture van with the right corner of his vehicle. He then plows into the last car in the left turn lane which in turn dominoes three other cars in line.

The result - damage to furniture van, total loss of the coach cab, driver injured (off work), several passengers seriously injured, furniture van driver claiming injury. The first car is totaled and the driver is dead. Extensive damage to three other cars with three drivers and two passengers claiming injury.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WERE THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS?

WHAT WAS ONE MAJOR CAUSE OF THIS ACCIDENT?

COULD THIS ACCIDENT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED?

WHAT KIND OF DEFENSIVE DRIVING WOULD YOU HAVE PRACTICED?

PLAY IT SAFE - STAY BACK!

Instructor's Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: FOLLOWING DISTANCES

EMPLOYEES: DRIVERS

INSTRUCTOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

Rear-end accidents resulting from following too close are all too common in the industry. Such accidents usually cause extensive property damage and injuries. Sometimes people die. Most drivers can recite word for word and number for number the following distance rules for motorcoaches. Why then do these accidents happen?

Contributing factors can be inattention, distractions, fatigue, hurry, running behind schedule and others. Actual causes can usually be narrowed down to either following too close or speed too fast for conditions (traffic, weather, roads, vehicle, light, driver) or an occasional brake or other mechanical failure of some sort.

There is one transportation company we know of where a Professional Driving Course is taught to every new driver and refresher courses to others. This company's philosophy on rear-end collisions is simple; if you rear-end someone due to lack of speed and following distance discipline, you will be fired. It is purely avoidable on the driver's part except in the rare situation where mechanical failure or where someone rear-ends them first is the case. What is your company's policy on this?

BEFORE YOUR MEETING:

1. Make copies of the Safety Memo and the Support Information for each employee and pass them out two to three days before your meeting.
2. Make your own list of contributing factors which may have had a bearing on the accident in the driver memo.

FOR YOUR MEETING:

1. Read the accident account to your employees.
2. Ask for their ideas on contributing factors (write down and compare with your list).
3. Ask what they think is the primary reason drivers follow too close. When have they done it? WHY?
4. Review the following distance rules for motor coaches under ideal conditions (five seconds) and add for poor road, weather, traffic or light conditions.

SUPPORT INFORMATION – FOLLOWING DISTANCES

There are many variables in heavy vehicle braking distances. As a result, we can use average figures only when calculating the number of feet a motorcoach will travel before it stops. Braking distance is governed by the weight of the vehicle itself, the mechanical condition of the unit, especially the braking system, the weight and type of the load being hauled, weather and road conditions, etc.

Braking distance, combined with reaction distance, gives the total stopping distance for a vehicle. This chart shows stopping distances at various speeds for combination air braked equipment for a unit in good condition loaded to normal gross weight and driving under ideal conditions. For this reason, this chart should be used for educational purposes only.

HEAVY VEHICLE STOPPING DISTANCE

COMBINATION AIR BRAKED EQUIPMENT

SPEED IN MPH	REACTION DISTANCE (3/4 SECOND)	VEHICLE BRAKING DISTANCE (INCLUDING BRAKE LAG)	TOTAL STOPPING DISTANCE
20	22'	30'	52'
30	33'	67'	100'
40	44'	125'	169'
50	55'	225'	280'
55	60'	275'	335'

Source: National Safety Council Driver Improvement Program
Instructor's Manual Defensive Driving Course -
Professional Truck Driver - 1st Edition, 1986.