



# Help your drivers stay safe this summer

Summer's return brings seasonal challenges to our nation's roadways. Peak travel months put added stress on transportation networks and an aging infrastructure, and truckers—simply by driving more than other people—deal with more than their share of on-the-road issues. Fortunately, you and your drivers can work together to help mitigate many of these frustrating and sometimes dangerous issues.

## THE FIRST STEP TO DEALING WITH ANY PROBLEM IS UNDERSTANDING WHAT CAUSES IT. LET'S LOOK AT WHAT MAKES SUMMER DRIVING DIFFERENT.

- **More drivers.** In terms of pure numbers, more people spend more time driving in summer than at any other time of year. Many of these drivers are teens, working summer jobs or simply enjoying their school-free months by hitting the road. Vacation and recreational driving is also more common. More motorcycles are out, too. And of course, generally cheaper fuel further encourages more travel.
- **More inexperienced drivers.** While it's easy to assume teens are the most inexperienced drivers on the road, they're not alone. Otherwise competent, experienced adults can get into trouble when driving an RV or towing a trailer they aren't used to. It's pretty unlikely either group would react to adversity as well as the average professional trucker. Inexperienced or distracted drivers also tend to overlook motorcycles more frequently than larger vehicles, often leading to quick stops—or worse.
- **More gridlock.** Summer is construction season, and orange barrels can lead to red brake lights—sometimes suddenly. As more drivers take to the road during the summer, it's only natural for congestion to follow. Getting off the interstates is sometimes no better, with walkers, runners, and bicyclists sharing less-traveled roads.



## SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR DRIVERS

Take a proactive approach to safety within your company, but also recognize that once your drivers are out on the road, it's up to them to put these lessons into action. Work with your drivers to prepare them for what they're likely to encounter on the roads this summer, and share the following strategies:

- **Plan ahead.** Whenever you can, schedule your departure and arrival times to avoid places and times prone to congestion. Just as you'd avoid making a delivery on restaurant row near noon, stay away from routes that connect to vacation hotspots on Friday afternoons. Familiarize yourself with data-driven websites and apps that can help you avoid construction zones. These resources have become almost as common as online sources of weather information—which, by the way, you should also check regularly.

While we encourage you to take advantage of technology that can help make your job safer and easier, we also want to stress the importance of never using these resources behind the wheel.

- **Drive carefully.** Expect other drivers to get impatient when traffic is bad. They may follow too closely or linger in blind spots. When following drivers with out-of-state plates, be on the lookout for signs of hesitation, sudden swerves, or quick braking at exits—particularly in states where roads and ramps are configured differently than in other parts of the country. When passing a car or truck towing a trailer, take care not to cause sway in your wake or alarm an already apprehensive driver who's riding their brakes. Back off when following, and be careful when passing.
- **Maintain your truck.** Summer heat causes more blowouts, so watch your tire pressure. Idling engines get hot, so monitor your coolant levels. Pay special attention to these and other [pre-trip inspection checklist](#) items so you can weather disruptions more easily—and so you don't become the reason everyone else has to slow down. [See our video on pre- and post-trip inspections to learn more.](#)
- **Take care of yourself as well.** Heat isn't only hard on engines. It can also cause you to become dehydrated or fatigued

faster than when temperatures are more comfortable. Maintain your cabin air-conditioning systems, and plan rest times before and after challenging stretches of road. A short recovery break is a good investment compared to the cost of an accident. Finally, remember to watch your hours driven, and get plenty of rest during off-duty time to maintain optimum performance.

- **Avoid distractions.** Sometimes it seems like every other driver on the road is distracted, talking or texting on their phone. As a trucker, your natural position of height above other drivers makes spotting others using mobile devices easier. Our advice is simple: watch out for them—and never become a distracted driver yourself. [To learn more, watch our driving safely despite distractions video.](#)

We all get it. Summer traffic can be frustrating, and congestion and delays can cost you time and money. But we all also recognize the important role you play in making the highways safer during the busy summer months. By managing the challenges of summer driving proactively, you and your drivers can help limit the impact of both nuisances and outright hazards.

**Our transportation insurance professionals know how to help fleets stay safe on the road. And we're ready to help protect you and your drivers when accidents happen. Get in touch with us today at [Sentry.com](#), or give us a call at 800-473-6879. We're here to help.**

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