

Loss control



Truck stop and parking lot accidents

Finally, you are off the traffic-congested roadway and into a truck stop or parking lot. Now you can relax? Not really. It's actually a time to be more alert. A large percent of tractor-trailer accidents occur in truck stops, yards and parking lots. These accidents may be due to drivers letting their guard down or feeling fatigued after a long day on the road. Heavy traffic volume and limited clearances add to the complexity of safe maneuvering.

Some truck stop/parking lot accidents occur when drivers fail to allow clearance for the "tail swing" of their trailers. Tail swing is a bigger issue if the trailer axles are forward, as there is more trailer length to swing around the pivot point of the turn.

Truck stops and parking lots are generally full of people coming or going who seem to have an extra sense of security in parking lots and do not look for traffic. Even though they may not be looking for traffic, it is still your responsibility to look out for them. Keep a watchful eye for pedestrians and other drivers that may walk out in front of you.

It is important that you, the professional driver, be aware that these areas can be the perfect place for an accident. Protect yourself and your vehicle by following these tips.

Entering

- **Avoid distractions.** Turn off the radio, put your drink down, hang up your phone, etc.

- **Use the correct entrance.** Don't get caught in a tight area not meant for trucks.
- **Drive at a safe speed** for the conditions and obey posted speed limits. If you drive a bit slower, it may allow you time to react and potentially avoid a collision.
- **Turn on your headlights, and activate the four-way flashers.** Lights, particularly flashing lights, attract the peripheral vision, and may help others see you, even if you are in a tractor-trailer.
- **Constantly scan for:**
 - Back-up lights on vehicles backing out of parking stalls.
 - Low overhead signs, lights, wires and advertising banners.
 - Pedestrians who often will step from behind a vehicle or other tractor trailer that may limit your visibility. Keep a watchful eye for pedestrians that may walk out in front of you.
 - Clearance around buildings and parked vehicles, especially while making turns.
 - Stationary objects, such as posts or poles, often used to protect fuel pumps, fire hydrants, sprinkler systems, trees, etc.



Don't let your guard down—accidents occur frequently in truck stops and parking lots!

Parking

- **Park in a well-lit area.** This allows others to see you better and also enhances your own personal safety and security.
- **Do not park on the end of a row.** Others may hit you when turning.
- **Park in straight-ahead slots when available.** Others are less likely to back or turn into you.
- **Lock your truck,** and ensure your cargo is properly secured.

Backing

Often truck stop/parking lot accidents occur while backing. What can you do to avoid backing accidents in truck stops/parking lots?

- **Avoid distractions.** Roll down your window so you can hear better.
- **Avoid unnecessary backing.** If you pass your destination, go around the building or parking lot instead of backing up, when possible.
- **Park in straight ahead slots** when available.
- **If you are going to back up, get out and look (GOAL),** activate your four-way flashers, and sound your horn. A person or vehicle may have just moved behind your vehicle.
- **Utilize a spotter,** if necessary/available.
- **Avoid blind-side backing** whenever possible.
- **Keep your eyes moving** and remain alert to your surroundings. Don't rely totally on your mirrors.



Park in straight-ahead spots when available.

Before leaving

- **Inspect your truck.** Many truck drivers arrive at their destination only to find their truck or trailer has been damaged along the way. Most often these “phantom” accidents occur while the driver is parked at a truck stop or yard and temporarily away from their vehicle. Some even occur while the driver is sleeping in the vehicle. Identifying damage at the location where it occurred is critical to determining who is at fault, as witnesses may be available, as well as security cameras.
- **Get yourself settled.** Many minor collisions occur when a driver is exiting a lot and talking on the phone, looking for paperwork, adjusting the radio, etc. Take care of these distracting activities while parked.

By following these guidelines, you can reduce the risk of being involved in a truck stop/parking lot accident.

For additional loss control assistance, contact the E&S/Specialty Loss Control Department at Nationwide: toll-free at 855-255-3790 or email us at LCHELP@nationwide.com.

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