



The Dangers of Speeding

Commercial truck drivers are often on a tight schedule. Hours of service regulations limit the number of hours drivers can work without taking a break, and drivers want to complete their deliveries within that timeframe, which can lead some drivers to drive too fast.

Dangers of Speeding

Speeding was a factor in 29% of all traffic fatalities in 2020, killing 11,258, or an average of over 30 people per day. Speeding-related deaths increased 17% from 2019 and were the most deaths recorded since 2008.

Increased Risk of Accident

Speeding can be a factor in any type of traffic accident, as any type of vehicle can crash when going too fast. Because of their size, high center of gravity, and weight, semi-trucks and other commercial vehicles are particularly susceptible to speed-related crashes. Speed can affect a truck and truck driver in the following ways:

- Increases potential for loss of vehicle control
- Reduces effectiveness of road safety structures (guardrails, median dividers, crash cushions, etc.)
- Increases vehicle stopping distance
- Increases risk of rollover when speeding in a curve
- Increases crash severity leading to more severe injuries

Driving Too Fast for Conditions

Even if a truck driver is driving within the speed limit, it does not mean they are being safe. The FMCSA prohibits truck operators from driving too fast for conditions. Adverse conditions that may require a truck driver to adjust their speed include:

- Weather conditions including rain, sleet, and fog
- When there is low visibility on the road
- When the pavement is wet or icy
- Heavy traffic
- Road construction zones
- Road hazards
- On curves
- On exit and entrance ramps
- When driving with a full load

Just because a truck driver is technically complying with the speed limit does not mean the driver is driving at a safe speed for the conditions of the road. Truck operators who drive too fast for conditions could still be held liable for any harm they cause in a crash, even if they were not violating a state traffic law at the time.

Speeding Combined with Other Factors

While speed is a factor in many truck accidents, it is often combined with other dangerous driving behaviors or factors. Speed can commonly coincide with the following:

- Drugged or drunk driving
- Distracted driving
- Tailgating and aggressive driving
- Improper lane changes
- Brake failure
- Tire blowouts
- Overweight trucks

When speed combined with any of the above, the risks of a severe crash become even higher.

Important Safety Reminders

Drivers' Own Speeding Behavior

- Remember that your reaction time uses valuable ground. The higher the speed, the more ground you will cover in that first critical second and a half, and the longer it will take to stop your vehicle.
- Know that every time your speed doubles, the stopping distance quadruples because of the laws of physics.
- Allow for more stopping time with bigger, heavier vehicles, when you are going downhill or are on wet, slippery, or uneven pavement.
- Move your foot to the brake when you see the brake lights of the car in front of you. That driver has already reacted, and you will end up closer to them.
- Pay closer attention to your speedometer, especially before entering a curve when your vehicle is more likely to leave the road. Apply brakes before the curve.

- Allow enough time for your trips so that you can reach your destination on time without speeding.
- Deep breathing or listening to relaxing music can help you remain calm in traffic and less likely to speed.

Handling Other Drivers' Speeding Behavior

- Give speeding drivers plenty of space and if they follow too closely let them pass.
- Stay out of the far-left lane, except when passing.

— NHTSA's Research and Program Development