



TruckSure By Trevor Toohill

TRUCKERS.....UP SPEC' FOR SAFETY

Up-spec'ing your trucks and trailers to the safest possible operating standard is the right thing to do. There is a cost, but it may well be a cost you cannot afford to ignore.

Some fleet operators and owner drivers alike have opted to put cost before safety and it is usually to their detriment when the final bill is in. I am not talking about general vehicle maintenance and cost cutting in this regard. What I am trying to take a look at is the extra cost of installing various safety devices vs the cost of the consequences of doing nothing.

Last month one of our clients had a driver drift a trailer off the sealed road surface while negotiating a light bend. The result was that the trailer, out of control, pulled the truck with it and down the bank they went.

Truck write-off \$80,000 and trailer badly damaged at around \$30,000!!!

The question again arises – preventable or not?

Driver error/speed to the bend, inattention, or was it mechanical failure.

Regardless, could this accident have been avoided?

Can you spec your vehicles to prevent every likelihood of a loss ever occurring?

Of course the answer is obvious. You cannot. But...you could do more than what you are doing right now.

This client is now faced with an insurance excess contribution of at least \$5000 as a single vehicle incident.

They have a truck off the road – lost production \$\$\$\$? A rise in next years premium \$\$\$\$?

Most likely this event will cost the trucking company in the region of \$10,000 and not to mention the negative impact on their client through late delivery or damage to the freight carried and the possibility of injury to the driver.

What are the safety devices to consider?

There are a number of devices in the market and about to be released. Some of these are being incorporated in to the manufacture of trucks and trailers and as such are already new vehicle components.

- The next generation in stability control.
- Pre-collision warning system.
- Adaptive cruise control.
- Lane departure warning.
- In-cab camera and GPS.
- Brake assist and disc brakes.
- Night vision.
- Rollover sensors.
- Active head restraints.
- Voice recognition.
- Intelligent networks.

What would be the best spend for this \$10,000?

Certainly not giving it to the insurance company that's for sure.

Half of this figure would go a long way to give some peace of mind in knowing that you had done just about everything within reason to make your vehicles as safe as should be expected.

My spend would be an investment in disc brakes, in-cab camera incorporating GPS, rollover and stability sensors, and maybe something to consider for the future – lane departure warning devices.

I can already pick your next couple of comments:

What difference would any of these measures have made to this accident? AND I can't afford to do any of these things anyway?

There is a slight possibility that none of these measures would have prevented the accident, but I am looking at the 90% chance that it could have been prevented.

It seems most probable that the accident was caused by speed into the corner. Two of the devices would have had a significant bearing on preventing the incident occurring.

An in-cab camera and the **pre-education of the driver** in its use and benefits would have immediately made caution in 'speed to corner approach' a primary consideration. A company instruction to approach all corners at 10 below recommendation can be easily enforced if driver habits are being recorded.

Secondly, rollover mitigation with sensors to augment stability control would have detected the moment the trailer commenced its roll. Warning the driver at the first stage of instability could be enough to bring the situation under control before the tipping point is reached and the point of no return for the rollover.

Then there is the cost!!!

I frequently hear the comment that no-one can afford any additional expense with the industry working such tight margins. That seems to be a logical statement and the market is the market but **safety must be considered as a component of expense.**

If you run a safe operation you should have less expense, less claims, less incidents. **PS**



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