

# TRUCK ROLLOVER PREVENTION

## Part Two



TruckSure By Trevor Toohill

The first part of the article was published last month, we continue...

Be aware of the shoulder conditions on any roadway. Dropping off onto a soft shoulder may cause the outside wheels to sink and trip the whole unit on its side.

**VEHICLE TRIPPING** - Tripping happens a lot on exit or entrance ramps that have a curb on the inside of the curve. When you are travelling a little too fast the tanker wheels will track inside of the tractor wheels. So even though the tractor takes the turn just fine the trailer tyres may swing in a little closer. They will hit the curb and trip the unit.

A good rule of thumb is to allow about 1 metre of clearance between the tractor's tyres and the curb. That way the trailer tyres should be clear of the curb even if off tracking occurs.

**REVERSE TRIPPING** - An improper recovery can lead to a reverse tripping condition. Let's say you go off the roadway and you try to bring the tractor back onto the roadway too quickly and at too fast a speed. This could trip the unit when the tyres hit the shoulder berm or the road surface on the return.

Wide intersections may cause you to be too confident when you are turning. Always gear down and slow down before the turn. Generally you are taught to square the turn at slow speed to reduce the impact of off tracking. But loads with a high centre of gravity have to be driven differently through intersection turns.

You should round the turn to make sure the trailer does not have a sudden change in direction.

Cutting short on a turn is one of the most common errors. Be aware of soft berms and narrow culverts. Wet weather may soften berms and narrow culverts may allow the rear tandem to slip off the driveway and into the ditch. That could overturn the unit.

When traffic conditions allow for it making a right turn into a driveway is safer than

making a left. It gives the rear trailer more room to track the tractor's path.

Okay - we have talked about Vehicle Design, Load Effects and Highway Factors. Now we come to the last area - in many ways, the most important - it's you - the driver. You are the one that controls your unit. Before you leave the yard make sure you know it like the back of your hand.

### DRIVER FACTORS

Begin by conducting a thorough pre trip inspection. Learn as much as you can from despatch and from other drivers about road and weather conditions. Remember a safe journey depends on your actions. So avoid unsafe behaviours. Encourage others to avoid them too.

And by unsafe behaviours we are talking about things like speeding, whether that's going beyond the speed limit or just too fast for the road and conditions. Distractions like talking on your cell phone or worse, texting. Complacency, fatigue and driving under the influence... and what about physical and mental conditions like diabetes or divorce, even something as simple as eating or daydreaming.

**Driving too fast for the vehicle and road conditions is a factor in most rollovers.** Remember that speed limits are set for small vehicles driving in good weather during the day time. Adjust your speed accordingly for the type of unit you are driving, especially at night and during bad weather.

Tail gating, road rage and failure to plan in advance can lead to sudden, radical lane changes and that can cause your unit to rollover.

One of the most dangerous driver behaviours is complacency. It only takes a second, adjusting the radio, answering a cell phone, reaching for a drink, that little bit of inattention is enough to slide off the side of the road or miss the beginning of a curve, even possibly enough to cause a rollover.

Driver fatigue is another factor. Maybe you didn't get enough rest during your time off. Maybe you are working too many hours or you are having trouble adjusting to rotating shifts. There are many warning signs of fatigue while driving. You may have trouble focusing; you may have frequent yawning, blinking or heavy eyelids and head bobbing. You may have trouble remembering the last few miles or you may miss an exit, a traffic sign. You may even find yourself drifting from your lane, tail gating or hitting the rumble strip.

If you show any of these warning signs get off the road, get out of the cab and move around to get the blood circulating again. If you are too tired to keep driving safely find a safe well lit area to park and rest a few minutes. Caffeine, energy pills, loud radios, opening the windows and other tricks to stay awake don't work. Don't try them. Instead follow the hours of service regulations and get plenty of rest during your off hours.

Obviously, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol is not permitted. But it could be a major factor in a rollover. Even over the counter drugs can impair your driving. Read and follow all precautions any time you are using medication.

Well, there you have it. Rollovers happen too often in the tanker industry. They can be severe and they can mean the release of hazardous materials. And they can happen because of the design and performance of the trucks, because of the characteristics of the roadway and because of the actions and behaviour of the driver. In most rollovers speed too fast for the conditions is the major contributor and its one that is entirely under your control.

We hope that you now have a better understanding of the factors that can lead to a rollover and we hope that you are better prepared as you head out on the road. The bottom line is simple rollover crashes are preventable. Rollover crashes are unacceptable and YOU are the key to eliminating them.

To view the whole video clip go to: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/outreach/cargo-tank-video.aspx>



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*'You sit behind the wheel - we stand behind the truck'*