

# Wanted, truckers with eyes in the back of your heads



TruckSure

By Trevor Toohill

I need to talk about claims again this month – not wanting to be negative but some stats crossed my desk the other day and I want to throw it out there for a bit of thought.

Most times when I have discussed claims and accidents it has been about the big ones. Rollovers and driver inattention make up about 70% of the cost of heavy motor claims. **But I want to talk about low impact crashes with stationary objects.**

Did you know that in the medium fleet range 66% of collisions happen in off road situations – parking lots, delivery bays, and manoeuvring for city drop offs – and most of these involve hitting a stationary object!

These types of crashes typically mean a lot of paperwork for what could be classed as minimal damage. However the sheer number of these that result in an insurance claim warrants some attention. Consider also that occasionally there is a big one that makes everyone sit up and take notice – like the driver who backed into a power transformer knocking out power to a shopping mall on a Saturday pre-Christmas. Ouch, Section 2 liability claim in the millions and totally preventable,

Then of course in the news as I write this there is a bus that tried to take out a gas line at a service station in Northland. A low impact collision with serious implications. This is not going to be cheap with the fire service and police closing down the entire town for half a day!!!

From my experience the most common form of low impact crashes occur from;

- Hitting fixed or stationary objects
- Backing and docking collisions
- Rear ending
- Bad judgement manoeuvring in tight spaces
- Inattention and haste

Regardless of the type of crash – hitting fixed or moving objects, or reversing and docking, the common cause is driver inattention or haste.

Drivers often face tight time schedules and narrow delivery windows to

accommodate 12 to 18 deliveries per day. Time slots have narrowed, with many deliveries sharing the same slot and customers requiring preference time deliveries and phone-ahead notifications.

Drivers need to be constantly reminded about focussing and finishing a task before moving to the next one. **If you are rushed you need to be reminded that you will finish faster if you focus.**

**Nothing will slow you down faster than hitting a post or an awning!**

For medium truck fleets the two most common types of collisions involve other stationary vehicles or trailers and low clearance and obscure objects.

The best approach to avoiding these collisions is to approach slowly, scan the area you are approaching including looking up, and getting out and looking, and that's not just for backing up.

At low speeds it is easy to stop and hop out to have a quick look around before making a tight manoeuvre or pulling under an awning or tree.

Backing collisions with a fixed or stationary object are always considered 100% avoidable and yet they account for about 30% of fleets' claims. They tend to involve other trucks at loading bays, passenger vehicles, poles, gates and bollards, and low clearance awnings.

I guess at the end of the day it really all comes down to training and experience with an added dose of patience and awareness.

When backing up you must be aware of your surroundings and know what is behind you. **Get Out And Look.** As a professional driver you are expected to inspect your surroundings as many times as it takes to complete a safe manoeuvre. It is always good practice to get out and have a look on a long back-up or very tight lot.

Most city delivery vehicles have additional help in the cab with the driver – get them outside the vehicle to assist. You might not think that it is cool to get out or have assistance, but it is way less cool to take out a pole or a car bumper!

This reminds me of one of the best pieces of driving that I have seen recently.

It was a late afternoon delivery to the Countdown supermarket in Pt Chevalier – school drop off time with kids and their mums everywhere. Traffic to Africa with a pre-school just down the road and a full parking lot.

If you know the supermarket you will understand. The loading dock is tucked away in a corner with only access through the tight parking area from a pretty narrow street.

Driver turns up in a heavy unit – semi and curtainside trailer.

To make a start he has to proceed several metres up the road on the wrong side, he gets out and waves a couple of cars past. Back in the cab and then to reverse across the road and up the exit to the carpark.

He was one cool customer, no haste and no double manoeuvres. He lined up with the loading dock and took a final trip around the trailer talking to a couple of ladies keen to get past. Once more back in the cab and straight in.

You guys know what I am talking about. It is great to see a professional in operation – he had major traffic to contend with, gates and posts, a power pole, distracted drivers and kids, more cars, trolleys, and it was a bloody hot day!

But that is how you do it.

Slowly, precisely and with courtesy and patience.

Now there is only one reason I talk about claims and that is to try and prevent you from being the one who has the crash and makes one.

Think about safety, the hassles, the cost, the lost time, the annoyed customers, your policy excess and loss of no claim bonus.

Plenty of reasons just to slow it down a bit and remain alert.

Thanks for taking the time to read my articles during the year. I appreciate the feedback.

The team at TruckSure wish all drivers and families a happy and safe Christmas and holiday. Enjoy!! 🚚



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