

So who's a good truck driver then?



TruckSure
By Trevor Toohill

Considerate and safe driving over the holiday period is always on every professional driver's mind but the message to get home safe has a little more grunt to it at this time of year. Holiday makers, overseas and out of town trippers, clogged motorways, and distracted drivers are all out in force. So perhaps it is timely to just step up a little as a professional truck driver and show the way by setting an example on just what a "good driver" really is.

This time around I thought that you all might appreciate a few words of wisdom from another source – one far more qualified than me. You see, over the last several years of writing these articles my most avid fan and perhaps harshest critic is my 86 year old father-in-law, Peter Meachen. Peter is old school absolutely to the core. A retired insurance manager and trainer, JP, marriage celebrant, defensive driving instructor lists only a few of his many talents. He also has a way with words and when I was struggling to come up with a topic to put to paper several months ago, he dropped the following comments on my desk in an effort to help me out.

I was going through my notes the other day and his words surfaced. I thought you might appreciate his views – perhaps from another era but highly relevant and perhaps amusing all the same.

From Peter:

"It should occur to anyone who gets behind the steering wheel of a vehicle that they can be classified to a certain extent as being either a "good driver" or something else entirely. Not that these words are particularly descriptive. If a Doctor makes out a report on any patient it often contains language that only another medical practitioner can wisely interpret. So you can look at the words "good driver" and to your own understanding of them, come to an overall conclusion. Or should you?

Have a look firstly at the word "good". Now this can have many many meanings that can be understood in so many ways. Indeed no two people will agree exactly just what it does mean.

Look at a dictionary and you should find something like the following - Good - (among many descriptions) satisfactory, right, proper, fit, sound, safe, reliable, valid, - the list goes on and on, but you should get the idea just what is meant.

The few words used in this description are those which are probably closest to some of the qualities which any employer or user of driving staff should bear in mind when taking on people who will use their equipment and vehicles in pursuance of their business and, of course, using the very best safe practices.

So have a careful look at these points yourself - how do you measure up?

Are you providing a "satisfactory" job for your employer, (or yourself in your own business)? Are you ending each day with

a satisfactory outcome? And what about the customers? Do they regard their connection with you as being satisfactory? When did you last ask them? And better still, are their attitudes to you personally, satisfactory?

Look at "right". Is it right for you always to be on time? Is your load "right" for what the regulations spell out? Is your paper work "right" for the job? Is it complete? Are you leaving at the right time or running later than you should? Is the way you are driving your vehicle "right" for all the conditions you will or may encounter? Is your watch right? Is your vehicle right for the work you have in hand? Is your load tied down right? And most important of all - are you sure you know which is your RIGHT hand as opposed to your left?

Now take a peek at "proper". Exactly what should you be doing at all times in your daily work when everything you do needs some thought to be given to what is appropriate to your current movements. When did you last double de-clutch down to reduce your speed to avoid a problem with an idiot who is driving badly or recklessly because you are on the road where he wants to be? Maybe he is one of those very bad drivers who cannot recognise that trucks such as yours have just as much "right" to use the road as he has. Remember though, that the last Driver who was able to avoid an accident is the one who could be held at fault.

Did it ever occur to you that just because someone has just roared past you sounding their horn in an obvious way, that maybe-just maybe- you could have strayed from the straight and narrow or be speeding just a little bit, or perhaps something is amiss with the load behind you? It does not do any harm to realise that another careful and considerate motorist might be telling you something which could be of vital concern to you. Not ALL of the other drivers of vehicles around you are idiots and it is good sense to accept that they just COULD be "right"! That is what points towards being a good driver. Always be aware that communication between motorists often means the difference between sheer stubbornness and helpfulness which leads to less bad driving and more considerate driving.

When you stand back and look at New Zealand drivers, the roads they drive on, and all the other circumstances surrounding the need to go from point A to Point B it is remarkable that so many statistics point to less and less problems using motor vehicles than imagined by those whose unenviable task it is to provide the means to keep our commerce moving. So keep up your careful use of Motor Vehicle transport bearing in mind that the nut behind the wheel does not have to be tight."

Safe travels and seasons greetings from the TruckSure team.
www.trucksure.co.nz 

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