

AVOIDING TRUCK ROLLOVER

MYTHS & TRUTHS

Our nation relies on the goods transported by commercial motor vehicles on our roadways. Among the products moved each day are hundreds of thousands of shipments of hazardous materials, such as crude oil, gasoline, and flammable gases. Most of these shipments arrive safely, but hazardous materials have the potential to harm the public and the environment by causing injury, death, and property damage when trucks roll over.

What causes truck rollovers and how can they be prevented?

To prevent truck rollovers, it's important to understand the reasons they occur. This means dispelling some common misconceptions about why they happen.

MYTH #1 Poor driving conditions lead to most rollovers. Drivers might think most truck rollovers happen at night, in the rain, and/or on a curvy road or on entrance and exit ramps. The truth is, less than 4% of single vehicle rollovers are caused by roadway and environment—related reasons. Over half (56%) happen on straight roads—not on curves or ramps. Approximately 2/3 of rollovers occur in daylight rather than in the dark. 93% of rollovers occur on dry roads.

MYTH #2 Most rollovers occur when a driver speeds or drives carelessly. Drivers might think most truck rollovers are caused when a driver speeds or drives carelessly. The truth is: Excessive speed is a contributing factor in less than half of all rollovers. In fact, only 28% of all truck accidents involve driving too fast for conditions. Evasive maneuvers are a factor in only a small percentage (5-10%) of rollovers.

MYTH #3 Rollovers only happen to inexperienced drivers. Drivers might think having years of experience helps them prevent rollovers because they've been doing it for years. But that may not be true, either. Approximately 38% of rollovers involve drivers with 10+ years of driving experience. Most rollovers occur among drivers between the ages of 25 and 55.



Safety Brief



So, if most rollovers aren't caused by external conditions, speed or inexperience, what does cause them?

Driver error.

Rollovers can happen to anyone at any time, so drivers can never be too comfortable behind the wheel. Some 78% of rollovers involve some kind of driver error, and over 90% of the time, the rollover is not the “first” event. In other words, some other dangerous event occurs before the rollover. It might be drowsiness or inattention, which together contribute to 1 in 5 truck rollovers, with running off the road due to inattention being the leading cause of serious crashes. The event might be a truck driver drifting over onto a soft shoulder, riding up over a curb, or incorrectly making a turn at an intersection. Attentive driving can prevent most rollovers.

Vehicle condition plays a role in some rollovers. In one study,* for example, 54% of vehicles in rollovers had a brake defect of some sort.

Load size is also a factor in some rollovers. Some 63% of rollover crashes occurred with cargo tanks carrying partial loads, so drivers must understand the “slosh and surge” effect of liquid loads.

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Safety Brief

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