

Part 6: Traffic on the highway – Sharing the road

When driving remember that there are many different users of our streets and highways.

It is everyone's responsibility to watch out for and adjust to the presence and actions of others.

- Passenger car drivers
- Truck drivers
- Motorcycle drivers
- Motor driven cycle drivers (moped)
- Bicyclists
- Pedestrians
- School bus drivers
- Emergency vehicle operators

The safety of all road users is shared. The more we make ourselves aware of and accept this responsibility, the safer we will make our streets and highways.

6.1 Drivers helping other drivers

Driving is a high risk task. It is important to always pay attention — keep your mind on driving — be alert and adjust to the actions of others:

- Keep a safe following distance;
- Avoid tailgating;
- Avoid crowding other vehicles and leave yourself space in case of an emergency.

Check your blind spot and watch for other drivers when turning or changing lanes. Avoid travelling in another vehicle's blind spot.

Avoid sudden or abrupt moves that might confuse other drivers.

Regardless of the speed limit posted, do not drive faster than conditions allow — adjust your speed to weather, road, traffic and vehicle conditions. Winter conditions demand your constant attention — watch for temperature changes, especially at or near the freezing point when roads are most slippery.

6.2 Drivers and large commercial vehicles

Very large vehicles can be intimidating to car drivers. The fact is that it works both ways.

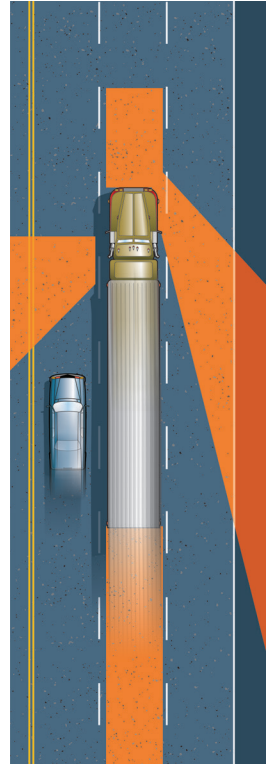
Vehicle drivers

Large vehicles require more space when making turns at intersections.

- Right turn — may require the driver to swing left before turning right. **NEVER** attempt to move into this open space.
- Left turn — may require the driver to swing wide and use all the extra space.
- Heavy vehicles require longer stopping distances and accelerate more slowly. Avoid passing while going down hill. Wait until you are on level ground and the speed has stabilized.
- Large vehicles have very large blind spots — always keep eye contact with the driver. Remember, if you cannot see the driver, the driver cannot see you.
- Allow additional time and distance to pass these vehicles safely.

Large commercial vehicle drivers:

- must have consideration for smaller vehicle drivers.
- do not tailgate, always keep a safe following distance.
- do not attempt to pass unless you have enough time to complete the pass safely.
- be alert while turning for vehicles that may crowd in beside you.
- be alert for smaller vehicles cutting in front of you especially at intersections, driveways, business areas and multi-lane highways.



6.3 Drivers and motorcycles

Vehicle drivers and motorcyclists must share the road and do so safely. Always follow the rules of the road and be alert to the traffic around you.

Vehicle drivers:

- Look for motorcycles; make sure you know what the motorcycle driver is going to do before you make your manoeuvre into their path.

- A motorcycle is entitled to a full highway lane. **NEVER** crowd into the same lane as the motorcycle.
- Motorcycles can stop quicker than other vehicles, therefore allow extra following distance.
- Motorcycles may be difficult to see and can easily disappear in your blind spot — **USE CAUTION**.

Motorcycle drivers:

- Remember your vehicle is small and not easily seen. Make eye contact with other drivers.
- Position yourself to see and be seen - as a rule, ride in the left wheel position and keep a safe following distance.
- Maintain your lane position. Do not zig-zag between cars in traffic.

6.4 Drivers and bicycles

Riders of bicycles must obey the traffic rules and regulations that apply to all road users. Drivers must respect the bicyclist's right to share the road.

Vehicle drivers:

- Bicyclists are at greater risk of death or injury in the event of an accident.– Drive with extreme caution when sharing the road with a cyclist.
- Under the *Motor Vehicle Act*, the driver of a motor vehicle shall not pass a bicycle travelling in the same direction as the motor vehicle, unless there is sufficient space to do so safely. When it is safe to pass, the driver must leave at least one metre (three feet) of open space between the vehicle and the bicycle. Cross the yellow line if safe to do so with no oncoming traffic.
- Do not tailgate or crowd bicyclist.
- Slow down when necessary.
- Check blindspot when turning.
- Avoid driving and parking in bike lanes.
- Look first before opening car doors

DID YOU KNOW...
about Ellen's Law? Failure to provide bicyclists one metre of space is an offence under the *Motor Vehicle Act* and can result in a fine and loss of demerit points.

Bicyclists

Road safety is everybody's responsibility. As a bicyclist, you have an obligation to operate your bike in a safe manner.

- Wear bright colours and lights and reflective clothing at night.

- It is an offence to drive on sidewalks. Bicyclists are subject to the same rules of the road as motor vehicle drivers. A cyclist must drive in the same lane as traffic, as close to the right as possible.
- Ride on the right side of the road or designated bike lanes if available.
- Use hand signals.
- Make eye contact with the driver.
- Bicycles should be equipped with a headlight, reflectors and a horn or bell
- It is against the law to ride a bicycle without a helmet.

6.5 Drivers and pedestrians

Vehicle drivers

Remember that pedestrians are extremely vulnerable to death or injury in a collision with a motor vehicle.

- Drivers must give the pedestrian the right of way in a crosswalk, unless otherwise indicated by a sign or signal.
- Pedestrians may not act as you expect – expect the unexpected. Be alert.
- Persons with disabilities may take longer to cross the street – give them enough time.
- Never pass a vehicle yielding to a pedestrian at a crosswalk.

Pedestrians:

- Always stop and make eye contact with drivers. Check ahead, left, right and behind for other vehicles.
- Always look behind the one car you see for passing vehicles - learn to expect the unexpected.
- Cross the street briskly. Do not run.
- At night, wear light coloured or reflective type clothing so drivers can see you better.
- Do not rely on the driver for your own safety.
- Obey all traffic signals, use crosswalks and sidewalks.

Important note:

Drivers must always be aware that pedestrians can be hidden in the vehicle's blind spot:

- behind the rear view mirror.
- beside the door pillars.
- to the sides of the vehicle.
- in front of and behind the vehicle. Do a circle check before starting your vehicle.

6.6 Drivers and school buses

Transportation of school students is an important part of our education system and requires the co-operation of all drivers.

Vehicle drivers

School buses are specially marked and have alternating flashing lights.

- Alternating flashing amber lights are to be used 150 metres (500 feet) before the school bus stops to pick up children. Be alert for students.
- Alternating flashing red lights are used when the school bus is stopped, while picking up or discharging students.
- Except on a road divided by a median, all drivers meeting or coming up behind a stopped school bus must stop at least 5 metres from the school bus and not proceed until the red lights are no longer flashing.

It is illegal to pass a school bus displaying the alternating flashing red lights.

School bus drivers:

- School bus drivers should be courteous and assist in maintaining the flow of traffic.
- Be alert for passing motorists when picking up or discharging students.
- Train your students to be alert and cautious when using the school bus.
- All drivers hired to transport children to and from school must obtain a "B" or "C" endorsement on their driver's licence.

Drivers of school buses must stop before proceeding through a railway crossing unless otherwise indicated.

6.7 Drivers and emergency vehicles

Drivers of emergency vehicles and other vehicle drivers must share the responsibility of assisting in dealing with emergencies.

Drivers:

When approached by an emergency vehicle using siren and flashing lights:

- Pull over to the right and come to a complete stop. Allow the emergency vehicle to proceed.
- Yield the right of way to emergency vehicles at intersections.
- It is an offence to follow an emergency vehicle within 150 metres (500 feet).

- When an emergency vehicle is stopped on the highway and has its flashing lights on, drivers must pay particular attention to allow emergency responders to do their job safely. Move over for emergency vehicles — *it is the law!*
- Slow down and proceed with caution;
- Make sure it is safe to proceed, then move over to the left, away from the emergency vehicle;
- If there are two or more lanes of traffic, the driver must move into the other lane if it can be done safely. This will ensure that drivers won't collide with an authorized emergency vehicle or endanger anyone outside the emergency vehicle.

DID YOU KNOW?...

Failure to move over for an authorized emergency vehicle could result in a fine and the loss of demerit points under the *Motor Vehicle Act*.

Emergency vehicle drivers:

- May only use siren and flashing lights when responding to an emergency.
- Are required to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons using the highways at all times.

6.8 Drivers and farm vehicles

Agriculture is a part of life in New Brunswick, and from time to time you may see farm equipment on our roads and highways. When approaching, it can be difficult for other drivers to determine the rate of speed at which the farm equipment is traveling.

Three major types of accidents involving farm equipment include:

- rear end collisions with moving vehicles;
- collisions at intersections where the direction of movement of the farm vehicle was difficult to recognize; and
- overtaking a farm vehicle that is turning left.

As a result, regulations are in place regarding the safe movement of farm vehicles. It is important that all other road users be familiar with safe driving practices when in the presence of such vehicles:

- **BE ALERT!** — Watch for slow moving farm equipment and adjust your speed accordingly. Give these drivers the courtesy that you would expect if you were driving the equipment.
- **BE AWARE!** — Look for any farm lanes near the highway and watch for signs indicating high volumes of agricultural equipment. When you encounter slow-moving equipment, slow down, keep your distance and assess the situation.

- **DO NOT PASS!** — First ensure that the operator of the farm equipment is fully aware of your intentions. Be sure that the way is clear. Always check your rear view mirror for other approaching vehicles that may be traveling at a faster rate than you.
- **BE PATIENT!** — Often, these large farm vehicles will not be able to respond to you immediately. It may be impossible for the equipment to move over right away if there are obstructions or soft shoulders on the road.

A note to farm vehicle operators Except when directly crossing the highway, every farm tractor and self-propelled implement of husbandry and any other type of vehicle prescribed by Regulation, when operating on a highway or any vehicle towed by them, shall have a slow-moving vehicle sign, as prescribed by regulation, attached to the rear in accordance with the Regulations.

6.9 Sharing the road with large trucks

Whether they are accelerating, braking, climbing a hill, switching lanes or turning onto a side street, tractor-trailers and large trucks must perform certain manoeuvres that all motorists need to understand.

A typical tractor-trailer combination — a power unit pulling a loaded semi-trailer — may weigh up to 49,500 kilograms.

Depending on the trailer the total length of the combination may exceed 23 metres. On the busiest intercity routes a motorist may encounter double trailer combinations (B-trains) up to 25 metres in length and weighing up to 62,500 kilograms.

These large trucks, at a traffic light, accelerate much slower than the typical late-model car. The truck may have to go through nine to 18 gears – a relatively lengthy process – to reach the speed limit. The truck may have two or three times more power than a car but with 31,750 kilograms or more of trailer and cargo behind it, a truck engine must move 30 to 50 times more weight than a car engine.

Braking

Most motorists understand that a semi-trailer will take more time and distance to brake to a stop than a car travelling at the same speed. But how much more? Typically, a passenger sedan travelling 90 kilometres per hour stops in 56 metres while a sleeper-cab tractor with a loaded trailer requires a minimum 60 metres.

It takes almost as long to stop a “bobtail” – a tractor running without its trailer – as it does to stop a loaded tractor-trailer combination. Without the weight of a trailer on its rear wheels, the bobtail comes to a stop only after travelling 56 metres.

When motorists do not understand the physical forces that act on trucks, the resulting confusion can have serious consequences. Using the example of a bobtail’s braking distance, our “instincts” tell us that a lightly loaded truck should have less momentum and a shorter stopping distance than one carrying a heavy load - and that a bobtail should stop fastest of all.

Braking distances are increased by two additional factors: reaction time and brake lag. Reaction time is the number of seconds it takes a driver to recognize a problem and take the appropriate action.

The average reaction time of most people is three-quarters of a second. At 90 kilometres per hour, a truck will travel 18 metres before the driver applies the brakes.

Brake lag, the period between the application of the foot valve and the time the brakes react to maximum brake efficiency, is more evident in trucks. The hydraulic brakes on cars and smaller trucks engage almost immediately. In tractor-trailers, however, the air-brake systems that transmit braking power from the tractor to the trailer are subject to a lag that can add many metres to the stopping distance.

A combination truck travelling at 90 kilometres per hour with a full load under ideal conditions will travel a total of 102 metres before coming to a complete stop. With hot brakes, the distance will be even longer, in excess of 103 metres. A tractor-trailer of any kind takes far longer to stop than does a passenger car and motorists must take this into account while driving.

Braking characteristics are not the only way in which motorists may be confused by a truck’s actions.

Turning characteristics have the same effect. For example, many motorists following a semi-trailer assume that if the truck moves to the left it is preparing to make a left turn.

In fact, semi-trailers often swing out to the left as the first step in making a right turn. Particularly when making a tight turn at an urban intersection or when pulling off the street into a driveway, the tractor must swing to the left first to

prevent the trailer from riding up over the curb or striking vehicles in the parking lane. Unprepared motorists, however, sometimes misinterpret this preliminary swing to the left as the beginning of a left turn that will allow them to pass the truck on the right. When the truck proves to be turning right, the smaller vehicle is trapped between the truck and the curb in the “right turn squeeze”.

When following a truck, observe its turn signals before trying to pass on the right at an intersection.

A trucker’s blind spots

One of the most serious misjudgments motorists make about trucks concerns a trucker’s field of vision. Many motorists believe that because a truck driver sits twice as high as the driver of a smaller vehicle, the truck driver can see farther ahead and can react more promptly to events as they develop. While the truck driver has a better view over the top of any cars ahead of them, they also have serious blind spots motorists do not have – immediately in front, on either side of the cab and up to 60 metres in the rear.

A truck driver cannot see over or through another tractor trailer in front of them any better than a motorist can and may have a limited view of the road directly in front of their cab. If they are driving a tractor with a long hood, they may not be able to see the first six metres of concrete in front of their bumper – ample space for a car to slip unnoticed into a position of danger. Even on some of the more streamlined tractors with sloped hoods or with no front hood (called cab-overs), there can be a blind spot of up to 3 metres.

The blind spots on the sides and in the rear hamper a truck driver’s ability to take evasive action to avoid collisions, so motorists must be careful to ensure their vehicle will be seen. An often-cited rule of thumb for motorists overtaking a semi-trailer is, if you cannot see the truck driver in their side mirror, they cannot see you.