

Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Program
Incident Number: 08KY010
Release Date: February 13, 2008
Subject: Coal Truck Driver Fatality Injured in Collision Involving with another Coal Tractor-Trailer

This is a summary. The entire KY FACE report is available on our website at:

www.kiprc.uky.edu

Programs

Occupational Injuries & Illnesses

Worker Fatalities

Motor Vehicle

Case Number: 08KY010

Summary

During the winter of 2008, a 39 –year-old tractor-trailer driver died after striking the right rear of a coal tractor-trailer with his vehicle, then veering into an embankment, rolling over and catching fire. The driver of a coal tractor-trailer (Truck 1) and the decedent driver of a second coal tractor-trailer (Truck 2) had descended a hill in the lane next to one another on a four-lane undivided highway. Truck 1 stopped at a traffic light at an intersection at the bottom of a hill while Truck 2 approached the intersection from behind in the left lane. The light turned green so that Truck 2 did not need to stop for the traffic light. Truck 1 advanced from the traffic light and began to climb another hill. Truck 2 approached Truck 1 on the hill, struck the right rear of Truck 1, veered to the left, struck an embankment, and rolled over. Upon impact, driver of Truck 2 was thrown into the sleeper compartment. Emergency medical services and the local coroner arrived on the scene. The coroner pronounced the driver dead at the scene.

To prevent future occurrences of similar incidents, the following recommendation(s) are being made:

Recommendation No. 1: Owner-Operators should follow Kentucky laws and wear seat belts while operating a commercial vehicle.

Kentucky and Federal laws both require commercial drivers to wear seat belts when operating a commercial vehicle. Kentucky Revised Statute 189.125(6) requires drivers and all passengers to be restrained by properly adjusted and fastened seatbelts. 49 Code of Federal Regulations §392.16-Use of seat belts, states that a commercial vehicle is equipped with a seatbelt, and the driver must properly restrain himself/herself with the seatbelt. The tractor in this case was manufactured in 1995 and was equipped with seat belts. Owner-operators should follow the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s program, “Commercial Vehicle Safety Belt Program”. A manual, “Increasing Safety Belt Use in Your Company” is also available to help owner-operators understand the importance of wearing seatbelts. The manual can be found at: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-belt/increasing-safetybelt-usage-manual.htm>

Recommendation No. 2: Companies should provide new and refresher truck driver safety training for company drivers including driver distraction and defensive driving technique techniques and Hours of Service as it pertains to fatigue.

Company truck drivers should receive new and refresher driving training semi-annually. This training should include defensive driving techniques and highway incident management strategies. Training should also include education on the causes of jackknives, roll-overs and the prevention of such occurrences. According to two truck driver training schools, defensive driving techniques should include looking eight to ten seconds ahead of the truck and how to deal with obstacles in the roadway (05KY089). Training should also include aids in helping drivers stay focused on driving and not becoming distracted. Companies provide refresher training for all drivers every six months to address driving habits including appropriate speed for driving conditions, wearing safety belts, space management, how to avoid becoming distracted while driving and fatigue.

Recommendation No. 3: Vehicle stabilizer and sensory systems should be mandatory equipment on all commercial vehicles.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Code of Federal Regulations, 393.55 requires commercial vehicles manufactured after 1999 to be equipped with automatic braking systems (ABS). The semi-tractor trailer involved in this incident was equipped with an ABS, but not a stabilizer system. When ABS is applied by the driver prior to striking or making an avoidance maneuver, the ABS prevents the semi-tractor trailer from jackknifing. If the ABS is not activated quickly enough, the stabilizer system can sense incorrect vehicle movement. Independent of driver input or action, the stabilizer system will override the driver, deploy, and prevent the semi-tractor trailer from a jackknifing or rolling-over.

Another system available for trucks is a sensory system which uses forward sensing radar to inform the driver that he/she is too close to the vehicle in front of them. Two indicators, a light on the dash board and an audio signal, will alert the driver of close proximity to the vehicle in front and will automatically slow the truck down thus expanding the driver's reaction time.

Recommendation No. 4: To better prevent rear collisions, companies should establish a safety program to install flashing amber LED lights on the rear of all slow moving trucks.

Vehicles driving slower than the posted speed limit, or slower than other traffic can cause hazardous situations for faster moving vehicles to negotiate. The slower moving tractor trailer involved in this incident was in the proper lane for the vehicle's speed. Companies that have vehicles that commonly travel at speeds lower than the posted limit should consider installing additional flashing lights on the back of the vehicle. Additional flashing lights on the rear of the trailer would have given the tractor driver a warning visual of how slow the other vehicle was traveling.

The Kentucky Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation Program (FACE) is funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institute of Safety and Health. The

purpose of FACE is to aid in the research and prevention of occupational fatalities by evaluating events leading to, during, and after a work related fatality. Recommendations are made to help employers and employees to have a safer work environment. For more information about FACE and KIPRC, please visit our website at: www.kiprc.uky.edu