

Unsafe parking and breakdowns on a roadway



Parking along the shoulder of a roadway or breaking down on a roadway puts you in danger of being involved in an accident. Other motorists often rear-end trucks parked alongside the roadway, especially in the evening when visibility is diminished. Frequently, the truck driver is found to be completely or partially at fault for unsafe/illegal parking or failure to place their warning triangles properly. This bulletin discusses unsafe parking, whether legal or not, and emergency parking.



Parking along the shoulder of any roadway is dangerous, whether it is posted or not.

Unsafe parking

It is evident that trucks involved in an accident while illegally parked may have some responsibility for the accident. It is very difficult to defend a driver's action when the driver has broken the law and has placed their truck in an area deemed unsafe by engineers who designed or oversee the roadway.

So, if an area is not marked "No Parking," it must be a safe place to park, right? NO! While it may be legal, it may be unsafe. Truck drivers should refrain from parking alongside any roadway as they may be struck by another motorist who is distracted, fatigued or otherwise not in control of their vehicle.

Entrance and exit ramps are unsafe places to park. They typically do not allow a driver to park a sufficient distance off the ramp. Motorists entering an exit ramp rarely slow to a safe speed, thereby increasing the chance of a collision. The best place to park is in a designated truck parking lot, well off of a roadway.

Trip planning is essential to minimizing the need to park in an unsafe area due to hours-of-service limitations. Drivers should take the time to plan their rest breaks so they will have a place to safely park off the roadway. It is also a good idea to have a backup plan in the event that a truck parking area is full.

To assist truck drivers in finding safe places to park, many states have Department of Transportation (DOT) websites available for drivers to verify current parking availability along their route. There are also commercial phone applications and GPS systems that will provide similar data. Finding a safe place to park may take some planning, but it's worth the effort.

Unsafe parking

In the case of an accident or breakdown, parking on the shoulder of a roadway may be unavoidable. A disabled truck on a roadway places the driver in an unsafe position and is a hazard to other motorists. To reduce these types of accidents, a driver should:

1. Conduct a thorough pre-trip inspection to ensure that the vehicle is free of defects which could lead to a breakdown and that the vehicle contains enough fuel to get to the intended destination.
2. Verify that emergency triangles are in the truck. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 392.8 requires the driver to be satisfied that all pieces of emergency equipment (including emergency triangles or flares) are in place and ready for use.
3. Immediately pull off the roadway to a safe parking spot if a problem is identified that is likely to disable the vehicle. If the vehicle cannot make it to a safe parking spot, it should be driven off the roadway as far as safely possible.

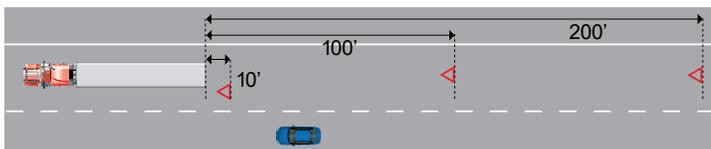
- a. Every effort should be made to park the entire vehicle to the right of the “fog line” (solid white lane marking).
 - b. Care should be taken not to place the truck on an unstable shoulder, which could result in a rollover.
4. Immediately turn on four-way flashers. Then, as soon as possible, set out emergency warning devices (triangles) as required by 49 CFR § 392.22 in the prescribed positions on the roadway.
 5. Wear a reflective vest when setting out warning devices and carry the device in front of the body to increase visibility.
 6. Contact repair personnel as soon as possible.

Placing emergency warning devices (triangles) out as soon as possible is critical to warning other motorists of your stopped vehicle. Many drivers fail to place the devices in the appropriate locations, most often not far enough out. The following depicts locations recommended in [49 CFR § 392.22](#) and apply when on the shoulder as well.

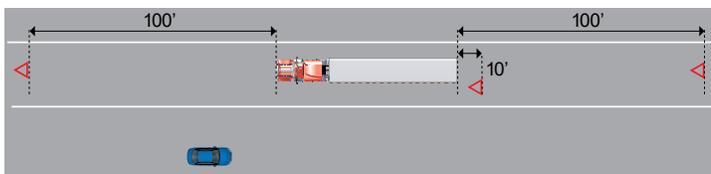


The driver in the photo did not set out their triangles correctly. Refer to the diagrams below for proper placement.

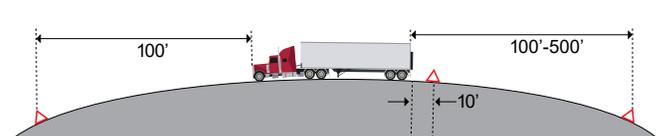
One-way or divided highway



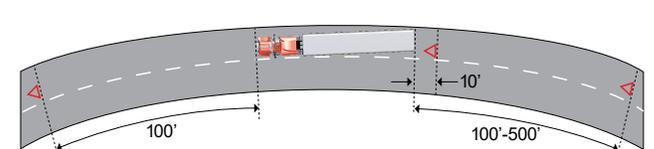
Two-way or undivided highway



Obstructed view



Obstructed view



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