

# Driver Safety Letter

presented by



## *Unfamiliar Roadways*

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Even the most well-trained, safety-conscious commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver is at risk of facing situations that could lead to a crash on today's crowded highways, according to the Federal Highway Safety Administration. One of those situations is unfamiliar roadways.

Because drivers often travel to new cities and towns, they may be unfamiliar with the roadway and feel compelled to read a map or directions while driving. The Large Truck Crash Causation Study (LTCCS) reported that 22% of large-truck crashes occurred when CMV drivers were unfamiliar with the roadway. Following are some tips that will help you maintain your route and prevent a crash while driving on unfamiliar roads.

**Review Maps and Plan Your Route Before You Leave on Your Trip.** Be sure to plan your driving route before getting behind the wheel so you can keep your schedule and prevent distractions that may occur while trying to read a map or directions. You may use electronic devices, such as a navigation system, to aid you when you are unfamiliar with the roadway. However, remember to use technology appropriately (pull safely to the side of the roadway or stop and take a break), otherwise it can be a source of distraction.

This is especially true when you are transporting hazardous materials, as most states and localities have route restrictions and/or designated routes. You must carry a written copy of your route plan, and you must follow that plan if you are carrying Division 1.1, 1.2 or 1.3 explosives.

An independent truck driver from Philadelphia received a \$17,751 traffic ticket for exceeding the road weight limit when he got lost in a suburban neighborhood of East Whiteland Township, PA. He was unfamiliar with the area and had difficulty following the directions that were provided to him.

**Do Not Suddenly Change Your Direction of Travel.** If you miss a turn or an exit, pass the turn and find a safe way to change direction. Do not take shortcuts. Trying to suddenly correct a missed turn or exit may result in you performing an illegal or unsafe maneuver which may threaten your safety and the safety of the vehicles around you. From 2004 to 2007 almost 50,000 moving violations were classified as an improper turn or an improper lane change, according to FMCSA.

**Signal Your Intentions.** Use turn signals first to indicate your intent to change lanes, next visually scan for adjacent traffic and road hazards, and then execute a safe lane change. By signaling your intentions well in advance, you will be in a safer position to communicate with the surrounding drivers and you will be able to safely execute the desired driving maneuver. A recent study reported that there are approximately 630,000 lane-change crashes annually (including both large trucks and passenger vehicles).