



HARD BRAKING

Hard acceleration or **braking** is a driver event when more force than normal is applied to the vehicle's **brake** or accelerator. Some people may refer to this as 'lead foot' syndrome, and it can be an indicator of aggressive or unsafe driving. At the very least, this style of driving is wasteful and uneconomic.

FOCUS

Drivers who frequently brake hard as part of their driving routine are jeopardizing their own safety as well as others—and that is just the beginning. Not only is an established pattern of hard braking dangerous, increasing the likelihood of tickets and accidents, the fleet's reputation is put at risk for unsafe driving citations and investigations by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). Too often, however, hard braking is the result of drivers not allowing enough space between vehicles to react in time if the vehicle ahead suddenly stops. Traveling speed is an important factor when determining total stopping distance: the faster the speed of the truck, the more stopping distance will be needed.

ANTICIPATE

Stale green lights. A light you did not see turn green, and do not know when it may turn to yellow or red. Be prepared to stop.

The **perception time** (recognizing that there is a problem) for alert drivers is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second. During that time, a truck will travel 60 feet when driving 55 MPH.

The **reaction time** (removing the foot from the accelerator and placing it on the brakes) takes approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a second, adding an additional 60 feet of distance for a truck traveling 55 MPH.

The **braking time** required to stop a truck traveling at 55 MPH is about 4 seconds, during which it will travel 390 feet.

Therefore, the **total stopping time** for a truck traveling at 55 MPH is approximately six seconds, and the truck will travel approximately 510 feet.

Considering that the distance of a football field, from goal line to goal line, is 300 feet, it is easy to see why a driver, who is following too closely, must now slam on the brakes to avoid rear-ending the vehicle ahead of them. The predicament, created by the driver's own behavior, has created the need for an emergency response, which may not be adequate to prevent disaster.

CORRECT

Using **Smith System Key# 1, Aim High in Steering**, we need to expand our "eye lead time" to 15 seconds,

Using **Smith System Key# 2, Get the Big Picture**, Proper following distance not only allows space for stopping, but also time to gather information.

Using **Smith System Key# 4, Leave Yourself an Out**, The only space you can control is what is in front of your vehicle.

TALK

Share with your peers, things or obstacles that possibly created a hard braking event for you. If you see your fellow drivers following too close, or speeding up to a signal light, advise them of some of the consequences.