



ANIMAL AWARENESS

October 2019

As the season changes to fall, we can expect to see increased activity of animals (mostly deer) crossing the highways. This is often due to “mating season” but can also be due to opening of hunting season, depending on the part of the country.

There are two different philosophies for dealing with animals on the highway. These are dependent on the size and type of the vehicle.

The first scenario is a small commercial or fleet vehicle. These vehicles are often similar in size to pickup trucks or larger straight trucks. Standard “risk management technique” for animals in the roadway for large tractor trailer commercial vehicles is HIT THE DEER, but we must modify this practice for these smaller vehicles.

A large deer or moose could create a catastrophic crash with a smaller vehicle. The preferred method is avoid the deer WITHOUT swerving. This requires extreme awareness and focus when driving in areas where deer and other animals may be in the roadway. Some tips for avoiding or minimizing a deer crash in smaller vehicles include:

- **Know where the deer are.** Be extra cautious and aware in areas where wooded areas are very close to the highway; farm fields are another place deer may hang out for the food source; creeks and draws can also be a place where deer can suddenly jump onto the highway; and the most obvious, where deer crossing signs are posted.

- **Know what you can do.**

- In a small vehicle, the best practice is to brake as hard as you can without leaving the lane of travel to minimize the impact as much as possible. Do not swerve and try to not panic and lose control of the vehicle.
- Tractor trailer commercial vehicles should use a different approach when they come upon a deer or other animal in their path. A Class 8 or full-size tractor trailer has sufficient weight (mass) to follow the risk management practice of HIT THE DEER. Brake as hard as safely possible and STAY IN YOUR LANE. It is hard to override your brain’s natural instinct to avoid things in your path. Leaving the lane of travel has the potential to create a MUCH worse crash from either turning the rig over or making contact with other vehicles traveling next to the rig.

The best method to avoid a crash with an animal in the roadway is to be focused on watching for them. This will allow time to slow down and give you space to not hit the animal. This will also get your drivers home safely as they deliver the freight that keeps our nation moving forward.



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