Tow Truck Operations Meeting Kit

What’s At Stake

Tow truck operators transport cars and trucks that are damaged, non-operational, or parked illegally, aid motorists, and keep streets and highways clear. Traffic never stops, so tow truck operators are called out at all times of day, year-round. The job involves personal safety, driving, heavy equipment, and traffic safety, so operators should learn safety basics for tow truck operations.

WHEN DO YOU USE THE TOW TRUCK SERVICES

Non-emergency facility. Non-emergency situations are those where drivers are violating the parking rules and causing chaos. For instance, the concerned authority possesses the command to call a towing company to move a car or impound it if it is causing hindrance to the movement of the traffic. The best examples are:

1. Parked the vehicle blocking a street
2. Parked a vehicle in a no-parking zone
3. A double-parking vehicle.

Emergency situations. Majority of the operators receive calls from drivers during emergency situations.

- A breakdown on a highway, accident, moving a vehicle that is a threat to the traffic.

What’s the Danger

TOW TRUCK DRIVER DANGERS

Distracted drivers. A distracted driver is a driver who is not fully watching the road, with both hands on the wheel, and with their mind on the task of driving. Distractions are a major cause

of accidents for all types of drivers. Common driving distractions include texting and other cell phone use, visiting with other passengers in the vehicle, eating or drinking, or external distractions such as other vehicles, previous accidents, and billboards. Distractions can be deadly to tow truck drivers, who risk being hit while standing on the side of the road if a motorist is not paying attention.

Reckless drivers. Drivers who choose to speed, pass other vehicles where prohibited, or tailgate increase the risk that they will cause an accident. For a tow truck driver who is already on the scene of an accident, having someone driving by too fast or attempting reckless maneuvers in the area where they are working is an additional concern.

Dangerous places. Tow truck drivers make their living by helping out stranded motorists. Often, these motorists are stranded in unsafe areas and the tow truck driver can become the victim of a violent act simply because it is late at night, and they are working in a dangerous area. Tow truck drivers who are in the business of repossessing vehicles are also at risk of violent acts at the hands of the individuals whose vehicle they're trying to repo.

Maneuvering a loaded truck through heavy traffic. The difference between driving an unloaded tow truck and a loaded one is like night and day. Drivers who are not properly trained on the proper technique of maneuvering a massive truck through traffic are at risk of making an error that could cost a life.

Fatigue. The job of operating a tow truck is labor intensive, and drivers often work long hours. When tow truck drivers work while fatigued, they put themselves and others at risk of a traffic accident due to drowsy driving or making a costly error when loading because they are tired.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Be Ready: Before you head out on the road to rescue a stranded vehicle or perform a repossession, make sure you and your truck

are ready to go. Tow truck driver safety starts by regularly inspecting your vehicle and equipment from the tire pressure and fluid levels to cables, connectors, splices and winches.

Drive Defensively: Getting from point A to point B is fraught with potential dangers for tow truck drivers. Always stay within the speed limit and maintain safe distances from other vehicles on the road to minimize the chance of an accident. When towing a vehicle, especially in adverse weather conditions, slow down even more and extend the following distance to a full length from the car in front of you.

Take Control: From the moment you arrive at your destination, the better you control the scene, the safer everyone will be. Turn on safety lights, mark the area with cones, flares, and markers, and move people out of harm's way. Before you start to load any vehicle onto your truck, make sure you visually confirm objects and onlookers are clear of your equipment.

Be Seen: Increasing visibility is one tow truck safety tip that can't be overstated. Make sure everyone is aware of your presence by wearing bright-colored clothing and using flashing lights and reflectors on your truck. If you're working on a federal highway, wearing an approved fluorescent vest is mandated.

Protect Your Person: Using personal protective equipment is also required for many tow truck drivers and emergency personnel working on federal roads. Wearing long pants and closed-toe shoes, and using work gloves and safety glasses, will go a long way to protect your body. Take extra precaution responding to an accident where broken glass and the presence of dangerous chemicals and materials are possible.

BEST SAFETY TIPS TO KEEP TOW TRUCK DRIVERS SAFE

Heat Protection: Much of a tow truck driver's work is done outdoors. Sun exposure is therefore a risk, so wearing sunscreen can prevent sunburns and skin cancer. Drivers should also try to work in the shade whenever possible and always have water on hand. Working in the heat can quickly lead to dehydration, which can be

extremely dangerous.

Be Aware of Blind Spots: Blind spots can cause trouble on the road or in a work zone. They can hide a pedestrian or small vehicles, such as a sedan or motorcycle. Drivers should ensure all mirrors and visual aids are in place and working properly. Awareness of line-of-sight limitations is essential too. The more aware of their surroundings a driver is, the safer they can operate their truck.

Truck Maintenance: Preventative maintenance helps make trucks safe to drive and avoids unnecessary breakdowns. It is essential to have oil changes and check the brakes, suspension, steering, engine, and transmission, as well as other systems. Towing equipment also should be inspected regularly.

Know Your Cargo Weight Capacity: Each truck can pull a certain amount of weight, which represents its towing capacity. To determine how much it can tow, subtract the curb weight of your truck from the gross combined vehicle weight, which includes any cargo already being transported. This is different from payload capacity, which equals gross vehicle weight minus curb weight to see how much it can carry.

Driver Training: OSHA requires training for all tow truck drivers. Each company must have established training procedures. Workers must be properly trained and tested to ensure they’re knowledgeable in operational and safety procedures and able to handle a wide range of situations. All training courses must be accredited.

FINAL WORD

At all times of the day and all year round, traffic never stops, and tow truck operator are always working. These tow truck operators transport all kinds of vehicles that damaged, non-operational illegally parked or subject to repossession protocol.