

# Safety Advisor



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## FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY

Following too closely or “tailgating” is a common cause of collisions, and is against the law in most states.

It is important to have enough space around your vehicle to allow you time to think, react and take action if a hazard arises. This is particularly true for semi trucks and other large vehicles, which take up more space on the road and require greater distance for stopping and maneuvering.

### Maintain a Safe Following Distance

A safe following distance allows enough time to stop if the vehicle ahead of you stops suddenly. One rule suggests at least one second for each 10 feet of vehicle length at speeds below 40 mph. At greater speeds, you must add one additional second. For example, if you are driving a 40-foot vehicle at 35 mph, you should be able to count four seconds between the time the vehicle ahead of you passes a fixed object and when you pass it. In a 60-foot rig, there should be a six-second space. At speeds over 40 mph, you would need five seconds for a 40-foot vehicle and seven seconds for a 60-foot vehicle. If you find you're following too closely, fall back and count again until you have at least the minimum of safe following distance.<sup>1</sup>

Remember, visibility is reduced during inclement weather such as fog, rain and snow. Always increase space between vehicles to stop during these conditions.

## Space to the Rear

Truckers are often the victims of tailgating. This can happen in congested or heavy traffic, during bad weather conditions or when ascending an upgrade in the road. If truckers find themselves being tailgated, they should:

- Stay in the right lane to allow faster traffic to pass, especially in heavier traffic or when traveling uphill
- Avoid acceleration. It is better to be tailgated at a lower than higher speed
- Avoid any quick moves, lane changes or fast stops. Be sure to signal turns early and reduce speed gradually
- Increase the following distance in front to open up more room to react, maneuver your vehicle or brake if conditions require it. This also allows more space for the tailgater to pass

Tailgating is an aggressive driving behavior and is often associated with incidents of road rage. Avoid flashing your brake lights or otherwise reacting in ways to aggravate the tailgater.

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) CDL Driver's Manual, August 2006



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