



Arrive Alive¹

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"TEN DIE IN VEHICLE ACCIDENT." A van, packed with agricultural workers, careened off a road into an irrigation canal, trapping and drowning ten of the workers. Most of you heard or read about this South Florida accident. Tragic? Yes. Unusual? No! Since then, two other vans carrying agricultural workers have been involved in serious accidents. In one, seven were killed; in the other, four lost their lives.

DEATH ON THE ROAD

Each year nearly 50,000 Americans are killed in traffic accidents; nearly two million are injured. In Florida alone, nearly 3,000 are killed and a quarter million are injured. **More people are killed in traffic accidents than in all other types of accidents combined.**

Each year over 10,000 Americans are killed in work-related accidents; of these, nearly 4,000 are killed in motor vehicle accidents. Yes, motor vehicle accidents are our NUMBER ONE KILLER both on- and off-the-job. The only real difference between on-the-job and off-the-job traffic accidents is who pays the bills. The tragedy is the same, the family disruption is the same, the loss to family, friends and society is the same: a productive and valued member of the community is lost.

TRUCK ACCIDENTS

Medium and heavy trucks account for two percent of the registered vehicles in the United States; five percent of all vehicle-miles traveled, and over twelve percent of all fatal highway accidents. Is it any wonder that Americans are concerned about trucks and truck drivers?

In Florida, during 1990, 324 individuals were killed in traffic accidents involving semi's and heavy trucks; this was 10.9 percent of all fatal traffic accidents. Pickup trucks were involved in 638 fatal accidents, or 21.6 percent, of all fatal traffic accidents.

As truck drivers, we have a responsibility to avoid all accidents, even those that errors of other drivers might cause. It is not enough to have a properly maintained truck. Vehicle inspections must be conducted at least once a day. Truckers must insure that their load is properly balanced and secured. Out on the road they must maintain an adequate following distance (a minimum of four seconds behind the vehicle ahead), ride to the right, use extreme caution when changing lanes and be prepared to stop for quick light changes or when other vehicles pull out in front of them. Constant attention must be given to light, weather, road and traffic conditions.

Finally, the drivers must look at themselves. In a recent survey of nearly 900 truck drivers conducted at three Florida agricultural inspection stations, truck drivers stated that at least one out of five of their fellow truckers "regularly drive under the influence of illegal

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drugs." Marijuana, "speed" and cocaine were identified as the most frequently used drugs.

Drivers stated that being paid by the mile provides the incentive to keep on driving. This leads to fatigue and accidents.

These truckers would favor regulation of dispatchers, shippers and receivers to ensure that drivers can legally meet their schedules. They also recommended individually determined rest schedules, elimination of loading and unloading duties, the installation of on-board monitoring devices, team driving, more rest area facilities and, naturally, better pay.

In a major effort to improve highway safety the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) has taken several actions. Among these are:

- Drivers of Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMVs) shall have only one driver's license. (No longer will truck drivers be allowed to have licenses from several states.)
- If a CMV license is suspended, revoked or canceled in one state, no other state can issue this individual a CMV license.
- By April 1, 1992, all operators of CMVs shall take and pass both knowledge and driving skills tests to obtain or maintain their license to operate CMVs. Some drivers with an excellent driving record may be exempt from the driving skills test. In addition, drivers of double or triple trailers, vehicles designed for passengers, tank trucks or vehicles that carry hazardous materials in quantities sufficient to be placarded must have special endorsements on their CMV license.

The Office of Safety and Health Act (OSHA) has also proposed mandatory safety-belt use and driver training for all workers who drive on the job. Once implemented, this standard is expected to save more lives than any other OSHA standard. The proposed rule requires that:

- All employees must wear safety belts on the job when in cars, trucks or other vehicles in which federal regulations require safety belts be installed.
- Employers must provide a brief driver safety program which discusses vehicle familiarization, safety-belt use, and the effects of alcohol and other drugs on driving.

- A "qualified, skilled instructor" teach an initial training and a refresher course every three years.
- Employees hired after the rule's effective date cannot drive on the job until they take the driver safety course or prove they have had equivalent training in the past three years.

There are many trucking companies with excellent safety programs and records. Likewise, the majority of our truck drivers are very safety-conscious. But, as in all human activity, there are those who will "cut corners" on safety, take chances, and make things difficult for all of us. For these people, we need rules and regulations—rules and regulations which will force them to conform to the "rules of the road" or they will need to seek employment elsewhere. Forcing these "bad apples" off the road will make our highway travel safer for all of us.

AUTO ACCIDENTS

Add up the disaster: 1,540 drivers, 671 passengers, 597 pedestrians, and 143 bicyclists killed on Florida's streets and highways during one year—1988. A total of 2,951 persons killed! Add up the pain and suffering: over 214,000 drivers, over 72,000 passengers, 8,000 pedestrians, and 6,700 bicyclists injured on Florida streets and highways during one year—1990. A total of nearly a quarter of a million injuries!

All other accidental deaths and injuries combined (falls, fires, drownings, poisonings, etc.) do not equal the totals of death and injury on the highway. Where do you fit in this picture? Are you a part of the solution or a part of the problem?

BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION

Some years back, the "ARRIVE ALIVE" slogan was symbolic of Florida. It meant "drive defensively", so that every trip on Florida's highways would be a safe trip. It was our reminder to drive in a manner so that we would "ARRIVE ALIVE." Perhaps we should again plaster that sign all over our billboards, newspapers and automobiles: we need to do more to make our roads safe for all of us.

What can you do about it? The answers are relatively simple. Some of the key points follow:

- Do not drink and drive and do not be foolish enough to ride with someone who does.

- Do not use excessive speed, stay with the flow of traffic.
- Use extreme caution when light, road, traffic or weather conditions are bad, and when they are extremely bad, do not drive at all!

What type of vehicle do you drive? A recent insurance company study found the following results (See Table 1). Note that pickup trucks and small cars are two to three times more dangerous than large automobiles. What kind of vehicle do you drive?

Table 1. Deaths per 1000 vehicles

Type of vehicle	Deaths per 10,000 vehicles
Large cars - 110" + wheelbase	1.2
Medium cars - 100" - 109" wheelbase	2.1
Small cars under 100" wheelbase	2.6
Standard pickup trucks	2.5
Small pickup trucks	3.3

To be a part of the solution to the death-on-the-highway problem we must begin with a safe vehicle. We may not be able to afford a large, new car but we must have a safe car, one properly maintained with good tires, brakes, shocks, lights and wipers.

Next, insist that everyone wear his safety belt and that small children are fastened into properly installed child-restraint seats. It is the law in Florida, but, far more importantly, safety belts save lives and reduce injury.

This should mean *no riders* in the bed of a pickup truck. Allowing children to ride in a car without restraint seats or safety belts or allowing children to ride in the back of a pickup truck are examples of child abuse by negligence. It is similar to allowing a child to play with fire or a loaded gun.

Finally, be a defensive driver. This does not mean being a slow or a fast driver. It means staying with the flow of traffic. Defensive driving means watching for hazards, using your rear view mirrors, signaling before turning, obeying the traffic signs. Defensive driving is *not* tailgating, weaving in and around traffic, drinking and driving, or driving while tired or angry.

Defensive driving is driving to avoid not only traffic tickets but also to avoid accidents, injury and death. Defensive driving is a very good idea for every mile, every day.

There is no way that you can venture out onto the highways and be completely safe, but there is much you can do to reduce the risk of accidents, injury and death. Most of you would not jump into deep water if you could not swim, nor would you venture into a drug-infested neighborhood, or allow a child to play with a handgun. So why should you, or why do you, allow other family members to venture out onto Florida highways without taking every precaution? Drive defensively and ARRIVE ALIVE!