



Each year unsafe and aggressive driving contributes to killing approximately 40,000 people on North American roadways. Of these deaths, nearly 5,000 of them are related to crashes between passenger vehicles and large trucks and buses — this is more deaths than a 737 airplane crashing every two weeks, or 26 in a year! These tragic stories, each one preventable, fill our news media and affect us all whether we are a commuter, parent of a teenager learning to drive or a professional truck or bus driver.

During the week of October 18 – 24, organizations across the country are uniting to put a foot down on preventing these tragic deaths and educate all drivers about the risks of aggressive driving as well to provide a few tips for being safer on the road. Called “Operation Safe Driver,” a consortium of government agencies, law enforcement and industry across North America are partnering to stop, ticket and educate aggressive drivers. This program aims to educate all motorists on the risks involved with aggressive driving by, in and around large trucks and buses and stigmatize aggressive driving behavior on the roads. This partnership includes The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, state and local law enforcement, and associations including the Governor’s Highway Safety Association, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, American Trucking Associations and the United Motorcoach Association to name a few.

During Operation Safe Driver, police will target aggressive and fatigued truck and bus drivers, as well as car drivers operating unsafely around them. Also, the program will raise the awareness of the motoring public about the hazards of operating around trucks and buses. Especially at risk are thousands of teens who are just now learning to drive and often don’t understand how to safely drive around these large vehicles. That is why high schools across North America also will be providing teens special programs and training materials about safe driving practices during this week and throughout the year.

Ultimately, the key to driving around large trucks and buses is to share the road responsibly. Drivers of passenger vehicles should understand how these large, commercial vehicles operate and these vehicles’ limitations. In particular, for those crashes between large trucks and cars, the majority of deaths are the occupants of the passenger vehicle. Before jumping to conclusions it is important to note that both car and truck drivers are to blame. In crashes between cars and large trucks where someone dies it is the result of driver error 88 percent of the time — either the passenger vehicle driver, the truck driver, or both.

Speed is also a primary factor in aggressive driving and in nearly one-third of all fatal crashes. The probability of death and debilitating injury grows with impacts at higher speeds — doubling for every 10 mph over 50 mph that a vehicle travels. Unfortunately, aggressive driving is highly contagious. Watching another driver’s offensive road manners, or seeing outrageous violations of the law go unenforced can ignite your temper and convince you that you too can drive with impunity. But driving with equal aggression only exacerbates the problem, creating a domino effect, passing from car to car and truck to bus as vehicles travel down the road. Additionally, when you drive aggressively with children in the vehicle you are teaching them unsafe driving practices even before they have a driver’s license. If you don’t care enough about yourself, at least protect your children.

So help us by joining together this week in educating yourself and others about the dangers of aggressive driving and of some basic safe driving tips. Don’t run over the rights of others in your rush to get somewhere, because cutting it close can cut your life or the life of a loved one short. Your vehicle becomes a weapon when you get behind the wheel and drive recklessly. Driving responsibly and sharing the road respectfully is literally in your hands. — don’t become a statistic. For more information about safe driving, visit www.operationdsafedriver.org.