



Playing our part in road safety



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON

The number of accidents that include the involvement of a truck is of ongoing concern to those of us who have spent a large part of our lives in the road transport industry. We all know drivers who have been killed, badly injured, or suffered the mental trauma resulting from a serious accident on the road. Unfortunately, exposure to such situations comes with the job. However, we should be doing all we can to reduce the risk of accidents as much as possible.

In 2016, 75 people died and a further 850 were injured in road crashes involving trucks. This was 23% of all road deaths and seven percent of all reported injuries on our roads. The Ministry of Transport states, "Because of their large mass, trucks tend to be over-represented in serious crashes. Deaths from crashes involving trucks make up around 20% of the total road toll, while just over six percent of the total distance travelled on New Zealand roads is travelled by trucks."

One extremely effective initiative the industry has under way is the Rollover Prevention Safer Journeys Programme.

The goal of the Rollover Prevention Programme series is to ensure that every truck driver in New Zealand returns home safely from work each day. The course is based on the fact that truck rollovers can be reduced by providing drivers,

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transport operators, loaders, clients, and related stakeholders with a better appreciation of the range of factors affecting heavy vehicle stability and handling performance.

Course presenter Jeff Fleury urges drivers to be aware of the roll thresholds and dynamic limitations of their vehicles. He outlines the direct impact that speed, energy, and inertia have on the seriousness of accidents, the benefits of truck safety technology, and how to drive to the conditions. Jeff also illustrates the trauma faced by the victim of a truck accident and shows how vulnerable a driver is in their cab, no matter how safe they may feel as the largest thing on the road.

Drivers in some parts of our industry feel pressure from despatch or customers to stick to tight schedules. Sometimes,

those schedules can be unreasonable if it means drivers have to take risks and travel too fast for the conditions they encounter along the way. If drivers are held up because they are thinking about safety first, then it is a responsible and reasonable decision to take, and the company management, customers, and despatch should support them.

In recent times, there seems to be a lot of activity around the road with tree trimming, cleaning up after storms, roadworks, barrier installations, etc. This has an impact on a driving day. Drivers and despatch should be aware of this, plan for it, and make sure that more time is provided where necessary to do the job.

Having good breaks, quality food, and healthy drinks are critical components of driving safely, so my advice is that no matter how busy you are, don't skimp on those things.

The Rollover Prevention Safer Journeys Programme is a joint initiative between the Road Transport Forum and NZTA and is supported by ACC and the NZ Police. Seminars around the country are organised in collaboration with road transport operators and RTF's three associations: National Road Carriers, Road Transport Association NZ, and the NZ Trucking Association. I recommend all drivers attend a seminar. ■

For more information, visit rtfnz.co.nz.