

TAILGATING

One of the Deadliest Sins on the Road

Nothing irks most people more than having someone “driving in their trunk.” If the tailgater is driving a fully loaded 40 - passenger bus, it’s downright terrifying as well as a cause for anger. Any motorists who have a run-in with a tailgating truck driver will spend the next several days cursing the whole industry to anyone who will listen.

Tailgating is not just a public relations problem for professional drivers. It’s also dangerous.

A Safety Gamble

The errant few manage to make life a whole lot harder for everyone else. But that’s really the least of the problem. Any driver who tailgates is likely to get hurt, sooner or later.

Tailgating is a factor in one of every four accidents. Anyone who does it on a regular basis is literally playing Russian roulette on the highway.

pavement. That’s the length of a football field. If you’re going 65, you can add another 95 feet to your stopping distance.

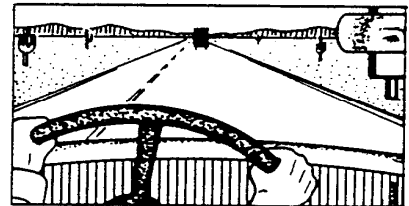
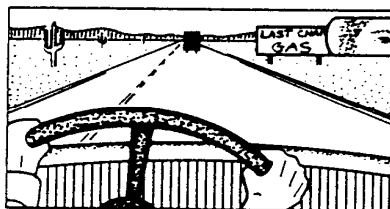
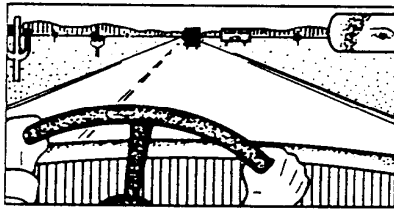
Add in such factors as wet weather, a downhill grade or brakes that are poorly adjusted and you’re soon talking about a couple of football fields, not just one.

Creating a Safety Margin

Follow these rules to give yourself a proper margin of safety:

Master the “four-second rule.” You watch to see when the vehicle ahead of you passes a fixed point, then count out “a thousand one, a thousand two...” until you have counted to four. If you reach the fixed point before you’ve finished counting, you’re too close.

It’s not always easy to maintain that space. Other drivers will pull into it. But you can do it. The trick is



As the vehicle in front of you comes to an object, such as a highway sign, start counting, one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, one thousand four. If you come to the object in four seconds or more, then you have a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you.

You Can't Stop on a Dime

True, you’ve got air brakes. And, true, some drivers like to think they can stop on a dime. But they can’t, and neither can you. The fact is, it takes your bus much longer to stop than it does a car, air brakes or no air brakes. Add in the time it takes you to perceive the problem, then react, and you begin to see that it is a far cry from stopping on a dime.

One study shows it can take 300 feet to stop an 18-wheeler that’s going 55 miles per hour on dry

to drop back as often as necessary to maintain the proper distance.

Your speed makes a big difference, too. Excess speed and tailgating go hand in hand. If you find yourself slipping into this pattern, slow down and back off. Above all, don’t buy into the notion that, because you’re sitting in a big rig, looking down on everyone else, you’re invincible. You’re not.