Defensive Driving – Negotiating Curves

Defensive driving is driving so as to prevent accidents in spite of the incorrect actions of others or adverse driving conditions, such as weather, traffic, lighting, vehicle or road condition, or the driver's physical or mental state. The defensive driver assumes that other drivers may make mistakes and is on guard in the event an error is made.

Your safety program should include defensive driver training on the proper way to negotiate roadway curves. While automobiles can lose traction and slide out of when negotiating a curve at an excessive speed, commercial motor vehicles will tend to rollover. The more top-heavy a vehicle is, the more likely it will rollover rather than slide out of a curve. During a tractor-trailer rollover, the trailer usually begins to roll before the tractor. By the time the driver realizes that the trailer is rolling, there is not much that can be done to prevent a complete rollover. The following are management areas that should be addressed regarding defensive driving and tips to provide your drivers to help them become better defensive drivers.

Management Issues	Yes	No
Do drivers know that the posted advisory speed on curves is not for commercial vehicles, but for automobiles?	❑	❑
Do your drivers know that commercial motor vehicles generally cannot negotiate curves at as high a speed as automobiles without the possibility of rolling over?	❑	❑
Do your drivers know what conditions make rollover more likely (e.g., high center of gravity of load, unsecured heavy load, excessive speed, etc.)?	❑	❑
Are drivers aware of the concept of a 'preventable accident' (A preventable accident is one in which the driver failed to exercise every reasonable precaution to prevent the accident. This is irrespective of the extent of property damage and/or personal injury, to whom it occurred or the location of the accident.)?	❑	❑

Driver Tips

To be a defensive driver, your drivers should:

- Ensure that cargo loads are secured to prevent moving from side to side.
- Ensure that the fifth wheel is adequately lubricated.
- Remember that top-heavy cargo will cause commercial vehicles to rollover in curves at hight speeds lower than those loaded with flat, compact cargo.
- Maintain speeds below the curve advisory speed to prevent rollover incidents.
- Reduce speed before entering curve as there may not be enough time to slow down before rolling over if a curve is entered too fast. Since trailers usually begin to roll first, a driver may not know the vehicle is rolling over until it is too late.

- Stay off the shoulder in curves. The right or left side wheels may drop or sink down into a shoulder and increase the chance of a rollover.

For more information, contact your local AIG representative.