

Preventable Vehicle Incident

With the goal of “world-class” fleet safety performance, we must uphold the highest standards for determining whether an incident is preventable and/or unavoidable.

A “preventable” vehicle incident is defined as any occurrence involving any registered company-owned or company leased vehicle (for which we are gathering mileage information) that results in property damage and/or personal injury, in which the employee driver in question failed to do everything reasonably expected to avoid or prevent the occurrence and regardless of who was injured, what property is damaged, and to what extent, or where the incident occurred.

To be considered “preventable”, the incident must occur resulting from the motion of the vehicle while the employee driver is at the controls and responsible for the vehicle’s position. This does not include the maneuvering of auxiliary equipment when the vehicle is stationary, e.g., concrete chute, crane on mechanic’s truck, etc.).

A “preventable” incident might occur on a public roadway, on company property, or on other property such as a construction job-site or vendor property.

Preventability is not the same as fault. Determining “preventability” is not dependent upon any degree of damage or loss. It is based upon the presumed responsibility, and expected skillfulness of the company’s employee to operate the vehicle in a manner that minimizes or eliminates the potential for an incident.

Local management is responsible for reviewing the “preventability” of any vehicle-related incident. Safety Committees, Incident Review Boards, Fleet Managers, Safety Directors, and others charged with determining “preventability” must make that evaluation using a high standard. The standard should be the equivalent of a skilled defensive driver.

A skilled defensive driver is one who:

- commits no driving errors,
- makes allowances for the driving practices of others,
- adjusts his/her driving practices to compensate for weather, road and traffic conditions,
- is not trapped into an incident by the unsafe actions of pedestrians and other drivers,
- is alert to incident-inducing situations, recognizes the need for preventive action in advance and takes precautions to avoid the incident, and
- knows when it is necessary to slow down, stop, or yield the right-of-way.

To be deemed “preventable”, an incident may occur because of the following (Note: there may be other incidents not cited here that could deem an incident preventable):

Intersections: An incident can be judged preventable in spite of complex traffic movements, blind intersections, or failure of another driver to conform to the law or the failure of traffic control devices.

Backing: Practically all-backing incidents are avoidable. Check clearances before moving.

Front-end Collisions: A driver must be prepared for obstructions on the roadway. Night speed should permit the vehicle to stop within the distance illuminated by the headlights.

Rear-end Collisions: Drivers must maintain safe following distances.

Passing: Incidents occurring when passing are usually avoidable.

Lane Encroachment: Entrapment in merging traffic and blind spots are not valid excuses for lane changing incidents. Squeezes involving parked cars / other objects are avoidable.

Railroad Grade Crossings: Collisions with fixed-rail vehicles are avoidable.

Opposing Vehicles: Drivers may be able to avoid collision.

Turning: Failure to properly signal, check mirrors, check pedestrian crosswalks, or take other defensive measure should be weighed.

Pedestrians: Incidents involving pedestrians are generally avoidable. Reduce speeds in school zones, shopping areas, residential streets, and special pedestrian areas.

Weather: Adverse weather conditions never cause incidents. Adjust to weather conditions.

Fixed Objects: Collisions with fixed objects are avoidable. Check and judge clearances.

Parking: Unconventional parking locations, such as double parking or failure to put out warning devices, will generally be sufficient evidence for finding an incident avoidable.

Mechanical Failure / Pre-Trip Inspections: Drivers are responsible to report mechanical problems particularly when continued operation might result in an incident. Drivers must perform daily checks of tire condition, brake operation, lights, and other vehicle systems. USDOT mandated vehicle inspections must be performed as required.

Non-collision: Incidents, such as overturns and running off the road, may result from emergency actions by the driver to avoid a collision. The key in evaluating these situations is judging if the driver made errors or failed to drive defensively prior to the involvement.

Securing of Cargo: Projecting loads, objects falling from the vehicle, loose tarpaulins or chains, door swinging open, etc., resulting in damage to the vehicle, cargo or other is avoidable.