

# SMART DRIVER<sup>®</sup> September 2024



## FIRE SAFETY FOR COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES

A fire can be a devastating financial event for a trucking company or a driver. Modern trucks and trailers are manufactured to be as light as possible, which means they are constructed using a variety of potentially dangerous materials which can become extremely hazardous should a fire occur. The dangers of today's truck fires include extreme heat, very rapid spreading of flames, and potentially toxic fumes.

A fire can seem small at first and easy to handle. Many drivers have been fooled into thinking they have more time than they do to put the fire out. However, the speed at which fires spread in and around today's commercial vehicles can be scary. What may start small can easily engulf the entire vehicle in just a few minutes due to the flammable nature of the components of the truck and trailer as well as the proximity to the flammable fuels used in commercial vehicles and in shops.

Fires can begin from any number of sources such as electrical problems, built-up oil or grease, excess heat stemming from tire or brake problems, cargo problems, cigarette smoking, or other external sources of heat. Remember the fire triangle; what a fire needs to start and grow includes fuel, oxygen, and heat. Removal of any one of these three will serve to put the fire out. However, if a fire gets out of control anything and everything on the truck and trailer will burn to the ground, leaving nothing but the steel rims and frame.

Fleets and drivers can prevent fires by ensuring trucks are equipped with the proper type and number of fire extinguishers. This equipment should be inspected everyday by drivers. Keep in mind that despite these precautions, a fire may still occur. If it does, here are some steps that can help save the equipment and load:

1. Get the unit stopped as soon as possible and call 911.
2. Quickly assess the situation, if safe to do so, separate the tractor from the trailer.
3. Use the fire extinguisher at the source of the fire. Remember the PASS method: pull pin or safety seal, aim the nozzle at the base of fire, squeeze the lever, and sweep/spray the nozzle from side to side.
4. If a fire extinguisher is ineffective or emptied, try using available dirt, sand, or water to put the fire out.
5. Disconnect battery cables.



**NOTE:** If at any time you feel unsafe, evacuate the area as soon as possible and wait for assistance.

Remember that Transport Canada regulations require all extinguishers to be visually inspected each month and serviced once a year. All carbon dioxide extinguishers should be weighed annually. Dry chemical extinguishers should occasionally be turned upside down and shaken.

US federal regulations require a commercial vehicle be equipped with a UL rated fire extinguisher of 5 B:C, or two 4 B:C extinguishers. Hazmat carriers need to carry at least one 10 B:C extinguisher. These extinguishers need to be inspected at least annually.

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# Knowledge Verification

Driver's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer, and forward a completed copy to your Safety Department/Safety Representative.

- |   |      |       |
|---|------|-------|
| 1. Many drivers are under the false impression that they have more time than they actually do to put the fire out.  | True | False |
| 2. Built-up oil or grease is one of the sources for fire to begin.  | True | False |
| 3. Drivers can prevent fires by ensuring trucks are equipped with the proper type and number of fire extinguishers. | True | False |
| 4. It's a mechanic's job to ensure all extinguishers are valid and are in good working condition.                   | True | False |



Answers:  
1. True  
2. True  
3. True  
4. False

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