

Safety Matters **Trucking**

Provided by: Reseco Insurance Advisors

Opening and Closing Trailer Doors

As a truck driver, there are many hazards to be aware of. One potentially dangerous situation that you may have to deal with occurs when the truck isn't even moving.

Operating doors may sometimes seem like a simple task, but opening and closing trailer doors are leading causes of injuries for truck drivers.

The Hazards

When operating trailer doors, there are a number of different types of hazards that you should be aware of. These include:

- **Equipment hazards**—While driving, it is possible that cargo could shift in the trailer, end up leaning against the trailer doors and then fall on you when you open the doors. Trailer doors themselves can also be hazardous, as they can be caught in the wind and strike you if they are not secured properly.
- **Environmental hazards**—These hazards include potholes, ice and mud surrounding the vehicle that can cause slips, trips and falls. As previously mentioned, wind can also be a hazard if it catches a trailer door. The resulting force can cause the door to strike you.
- **Behavioral hazards**—Behavioral hazards result from being negligent or rushing. These are hazards that you can control. It is necessary for drivers to follow

proper procedures and take every precaution each time they are opening and closing a trailer door. Some examples of negligent behavior that cause this type of hazard include standing in the path of falling cargo, failing to use a door strap, and ignoring or disregarding potential environmental hazards.

Take Precautions

When operating a trailer door, it is important to take note of the potential hazards and then make sure that you are following general safety precautions. Follow these steps in order to reduce the likelihood of injury:

- Stretch before operating a trailer door in order to minimize the chance of straining your back or shoulders.
- Check for slip, trip and fall hazards in the area.
- Observe the area for other people, vehicles or possible obstructions that could be in the radius of the trailer doors.
- Identify an escape path in case you need to get away from a swinging door or



falling cargo in a hurry.

- Check the direction and strength of the wind.
- Use door straps when appropriate.
- Push against the doors to check if there is shifted cargo leaning against them. Do not open them all the way unless you are certain it is safe.
- If cargo is leaning up against the doors, close and lock the door and then find help. Do not attempt to catch falling cargo.
- Always stand outside the radius of a swinging door to limit the risk of being struck by it.
- In the event that a trailer door is caught by the wind, do not attempt to catch or hold on to it.
- If you are able to open the doors safely, be sure to secure them properly to the side of your trailer.

Safety First

Getting your cargo to its destination on time is a key element of being a truck driver, but an even more important part of the job is safety. If you have any questions about operating trailer doors, talk to your supervisor.