

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



Get Out, Get Under, or Get In?

Tornadoes are unpredictable, inevitable, damaging and sometimes deadly. Experiencing one is a very humbling event. You get to see just how powerful nature can be and just how helpless we can be. In addition, the outcome of a tornado is virtually unexplainable. One structure may remain undamaged while all others surrounding it are totally demolished.

With rapidly improving technology, the National Weather Service has radically improved their ability to predict the possibility of tornadic activity; even so, they still can't definitely state when or where a tornado will occur. Most often, it literally comes down to a matter of seconds of notification and subsequent reaction.

This presents a very dangerous situation for long haul truck drivers. One item to consider is the fact that the driver may not be listening to a local/regional radio broadcast, consequently missing out on the local weather situation. In addition, if the driver is aware of an impending tornado he most likely is not familiar with the immediate area and may not know where the best place of refuge may be. Most often the choices are stay in your truck, get out and lie in a ditch, or seek shelter under an overpass.

This was the very situation that Linnie faced early last summer. He was driving east through Kansas (tornado alley) one afternoon when a tornado suddenly developed. Because Linnie was not listening to the radio he did not receive the broadcasted warning. However, he did notice the unusual cloud formations and the actions being taken by other motorists. Lennie figured it was an inbound tornado so he decided to park his truck under an interstate overpass and wait it out. This proved to be an incorrect course of action. Lennie survived without any serious injuries but his truck, trailer and freight were totally demolished. Lennie thought that he had taken the best possible action to avoid the effects of the tornado, but there may have been a better choice.

LIFE LESSON

It would seem that seeking shelter under an overpass would be a good idea. However, there are some dynamics involved that indicate otherwise. The fierce winds generated by a tornado are increased when they are funneled under an overpass. In addition, a vehicle the size of a road tractor and van trailer under an overpass present an even larger "semi pressurized" object that the wind will strongly affect.

So what should a driver do if a tornado is present? Seek shelter away from the vehicle. If that is not an option, then getting in a ditch is the next best option. Just hope that you aren't sharing the ditch with jake-no-shoulders (sneaky snake).



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