

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



Seat Belts for Coolers?

Who would have thought? How many times have you heard that question, or even asked it yourself? It seems that life is filled with an endless list of “things” that happen which make us laugh, or cry, or even be thankful that it did not happen to us. Such was the situation just last month when Barbara departed on an extended dispatch that would rack up several miles and several dollars. She was ready.

To save money on groceries (highway food is expensive) and to maintain a healthy diet (highway food is also fattening) Barbara had loaded up a cooler of her favorite snacks and drinks for the trip. She had it planned out for each day. Nothing was left to luck; Barbara had packed exactly what she wanted and needed for the extended dispatch. Not only had she invested much thought and planning into the contents of the cooler, she had also paid good money for it. It meant something to her.

Out of convenience Barbara placed her cooler on the seat next to her. That way she could easily reach it and get whatever she wanted without having to pull over, or even reduce her ability to focus on driving. This all made sense until she had to abruptly apply the brakes to minimize the impact with a deer that had just jumped into the front of her lane. Barbara was, and still is, a well-trained and focused professional truck driver. She knew that even though it would most likely kill the deer and cause some physical damage to her truck, the safest reaction was to brace and brake and to not attempt to avoid the animal by steering away. The typical outcome from that evasive maneuver is either a head-on collision or an overturned vehicle in the median or ditch – while the deer runs away. Just ask Bambi or any insurance company and they will tell you the same thing.

What happened? Barbara truly valued her cooler so she reached over to stop it from flying forward. As she did her shoulder was injured (ever hear of a torn rotator cuff) and she bumped her head on the steering wheel.

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Barbara did the right thing when the deer entered her path. However, she had not done the right thing when she placed her cooler on the passenger seat without securing it. During any hard turn or brake all freight (that which is in/on the trailer and that which is in the cab) will exert movement in the direction of the turn/brake. Unsecured freight will be damaged and will cause damage.

In this case, Barbara’s cooler spilled its contents, some of which broke. In addition, a good portion of her cab was covered with ice and cold water, some of which she placed on her forehead to reduce the pain. Barbara is almost always a thinker.



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