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## SAFETY BULLETIN



**National  
Transportation  
Safety Board**

November 20, 2015

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## NTSB Issues Recommendations to FMCSA Regarding Synthetic Drug Use by Drivers

NTSB: Trucker's Use of Synthetic Marijuana Caused Fatal Crash

As a result of its investigation of a truck crash that killed four college athletes last year, the National Transportation Safety Board issued recommendations on Nov. 17 aimed at helping motor carriers address "impairing substances" that are not tested for under federal regulations.

NTSB said it has determined that the truck driver charged with killing four members of the North Central Texas College softball team by crashing his tractor-trailer into the bus they were riding in caused the accident "due to incapacitation stemming from his likely use of a synthetic cannabinoid," commonly known as synthetic marijuana.

The board also stated that the driver at fault had a documented history of drug use.

### Next week's Safety Bulletin

There will be no Idealease Safety Bulletin next week, Friday November 27 during the Thanksgiving Holiday week.

Your next Idealease Safety Bulletin will be Friday December 4th.

Have a Safe and Enjoyable Thanksgiving Holiday with your Family and Friends!

**Look out for the  
2016 Safety**

According to NTSB, synthetic cannabinoids are chemical compounds “marketed as allegedly legal alternatives to marijuana; however, their effects can be considerably worse and they have been known to cause psychosis, seizures, and nonresponsiveness.”

The crash occurred on Sept. 26, 2014, along Interstate 35 North near Davis, Okla. The team was returning to Gainesville, Texas, from a scrimmage in Bethany, Okla., when the truck, after negotiating a slight rightward curve, departed the left lane, crossed the 100-foot-wide median and traveled more than 1,100 feet before colliding with the team’s medium-size bus in the southbound lane.

Four bus passengers died and five were seriously injured. Six additional bus passengers and both drivers sustained minor injuries.

As a result of the investigation, the NTSB issued two new recommendations to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:

- Determine the prevalence of commercial motor vehicle driver use of impairing substances, particularly synthetic cannabinoids, and develop a plan to reduce the use of such substances.
- Work with motor carrier industry stakeholders to develop a plan to aid motor carriers in addressing commercial motor vehicle driver use of impairing substances, particularly those not covered under current drug-testing regulations – such as promoting best practices by carriers, expanding impairment detection training and authority, and developing performance-based methods of evaluation.

In addition, NTSB issued this recommendation to the American Trucking Associations, American Bus Association, United Motorcoach Association, Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, and Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance:

- Inform your members about the dangers of driver use of synthetic drugs and encourage them to take steps to prevent drivers from using these substances

[Click here](#) for further information about the NTSB investigation.

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## Be Aware of Synthetic Cannabinoids!

As first reported to you in the April 10, 2010 Idealease Safety Bulletin the use of synthetic marijuana sold under the names of K2 and Spice and other names as incense is available in the US and provides the user the same



effect as marijuana. The Drug Enforcement Administration DEA has now announced that synthetic marijuana is now a controlled substance making it illegal to use by a commercial motor vehicle driver.

In a Federal Register entry published Jan. 10, 2014 the DEA said the “synthetic cannabinoids” are “an imminent hazard to the public safety,” and there are no medical uses for the synthetic strains.

Synthetic marijuana, according to the DEA’s Federal Register entry, is “functionally similar” to the active ingredient in natural marijuana — THC. The cannabinoids are not organic, though, and are created in a laboratory. Moreover, the DEA says, “the vast majority of cannabinoids are manufactured in Asia by individuals who are not bound by any manufacturing requirements or quality control standards.”

The FMCSA prohibits a driver from engaging in a safety-sensitive function when the driver uses “any controlled substance” except under the supervision of a licensed medical practitioner. [49 CFR 382.213\(a\)](#).

DOT drug tests, however, do not test for synthetic marijuana, and many, if not most, non-DOT drug testing regimens will not detect synthetics. It is not known at this point if the FMCSA intends to amend its drug test to include these substances.

But because synthetic marijuana is now a controlled substance, motor carriers must prohibit its use by drivers even if it not tested for at the moment. Company policy should prohibit the possession or use of synthetic marijuana. If a driver involved in a crash is proven to have used synthetic marijuana, that fact may be considered evidence of negligence by both the driver and the carrier.

The drug is generally smoked, the DEA says (information obtained from Internet message boards and from law enforcement officers). According to the DEA, it is sold under hundreds of brand names, some of which are: Spice, K2, Blaze, Red X Dawn, Paradise, Demon, Black Magic, Spike, Mr. Nice Guy, Ninja, Zohai, Dream, Genie, Scene, Smoke, Skunk, Serenity, Yucatan, Fire, Crazy Clown, Black Mamba, Crazy Monkey, Dead Man Walking, Funky Monkey, Sexy Monkey, SinX, TenX, Twilight and 3X.

[Click here](#) for more information about Synthetic Marijuana

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## Don't Crowd the Plow

This week much of the Midwest will experience the first Winter Storm watch of the season. During



winter storms, snowplows work around the clock to make roads passable. These large vehicles can present a hazard for drivers who follow too closely. Observe these tips to stay safe while giving snowplow operators room to do their jobs.

- **Keep well back from snowplows**

Plow drivers can't see directly behind their trucks. Sometimes they must stop or back up. Staying a safe distance behind a snowplow will protect you from possible injury and protect your car from sanding material that plows spread on slick roadways.

- **Know where the snowplow is on multi-lane highways**

The plow could be in either lane, or on the shoulder. Watch for snowplows on interstate ramps and "authorized vehicle only" turnarounds.

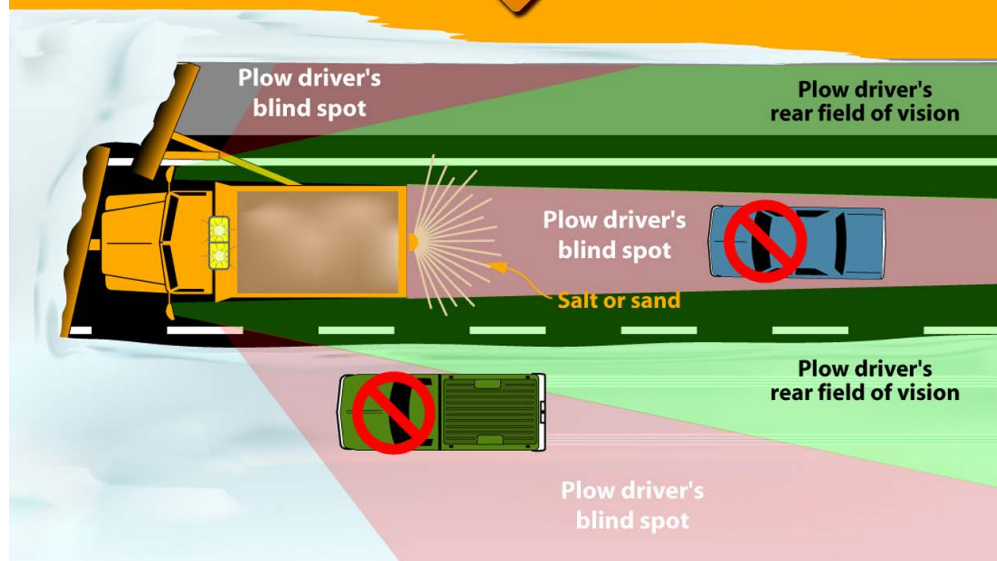
- **Never drive through a snow cloud or whiteout conditions**

You can't be sure if such conditions are caused by crosswinds or by a snowplow, so be patient. Snowplow operators periodically pull over to allow traffic to pass.

Snowplow operators are extremely safety-conscious, but they need your help. Stay back and let them safely do their job of clearing the road for you. Don't take a chance. Don't crowd the plow!

**Use caution when approaching a snowplow.  
Snowplows typically operate at 25-35 mph.**

**Never pass on the shoulder side of a plow.  
Plows will move snow to the shoulders.**



**Don't assume plow drivers see you.  
Their fields of vision are limited.**

## Holiday Driving Tips

Holiday events and celebrations can be exciting times for family and friends to get together.

But, get-togethers with family and friends can turn into tragedies when people are killed or injured in traffic crashes. As the holiday season is approaching, motorists need to be mindful of actions that will make their holiday travel safer.

Drivers can protect themselves and their passengers by following these holiday travel rules. Before you start your trip, make sure your vehicle is tuned up and in good shape for travel. This is especially important for winter driving conditions. Restrain yourself and your passengers properly in seat belts and car safety seats. Remember, the rear seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride. Be flexible in setting your travel plans. Leave early if you can to avoid the peak traffic hours. If snow is predicted during the time you plan to travel, change your schedule. It is better to reschedule your get-together than to risk the lives of traveling family or friends. Stay fresh and alert when driving. Take plenty of breaks and do not push yourself to meet an unrealistic schedule. If you get tired, pull off the road into a rest area or business, get out of the car for some fresh air, buy something to refresh you, or just relax until you feel

revived. If that doesn't work, find a motel or campground where you can spend the night.

***Forty-one percent of fatal traffic accidents are single vehicle crashes.***

These crashes most often occur during the late night/early morning hours and the late afternoon hours to drivers who are tired, have consumed alcohol, or both. Keep your speed down. Give yourself plenty of time and distance to react to the traffic around you. Let impatient and aggressive drivers pass you or go through the intersection ahead of you so that you control the situation. Do not pass if you cannot see enough clear road to pass safely. If there will be drinking at your holiday get-together, choose a designated driver who will remain alcohol free. Because driving requires your full attention, pull off the road if you have to use your cellular phone.

The first parking lot in the world was created in Fort Wayne, Indiana no doubt just in time for holiday shopping. Parking lots at this time of the year can be especially dangerous for drivers making deliveries or just stopping for lunch. The exposure exists for a vehicle accident as well as being involved in an accident as a pedestrian. This holiday season pay special attention when operating in a parking lot and observe the following advice:

- Wear your seatbelt – even low speed collisions can throw you around the cab of your truck.
- Obey all traffic signs such as Stop and Yield
- Drive slowly and use your turn signals and headlights – make sure your vehicle is seen and watch for distracted motorists who do not see you coming
- Obey traffic lanes and do NOT drive diagonally across lots (watch for cars cutting diagonally across lots)
- Slow down for speed bumps as not to injure yourself or damage your cargo.
- Be extra careful at entrances and exits – motorists stop suddenly and for no apparent reason – tailgaters often end up in rear-end collisions, and rushing while turning into access road or side street traffic can also lead to collisions
- Be especially careful in lots that contain Post Offices, package stores and other locations where people are prone to dart in and out hastily in a hurry to be on their way
- Be extra careful during peak times when reckless drivers may speed through lanes while trying to get a “better spot” closer to the shops
- Some drivers are on the “hunt” for an ideal parking spot and may drive erratically – watching for open spots rather than watching where they are driving! These drivers often circle the lanes nearest to their store – parking away from stores may make a longer walk, but prove less dangerous from a vehicle collision standpoint

Lock your truck at all times when not attended. Parking lots are very busy and are often targeted by thieves.

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### **3 Point Rule! (No, I am not talking Basketball)**

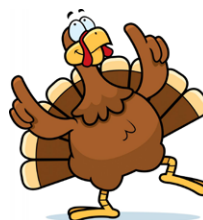
Now is a good time to remind drivers to follow the 3 Point rule while getting in and out of their trucks. During the winter months footing conditions are compromised and the chance of slipping or falling is increased.

The 3 Point rule is simply that you keep three out of four of your contact points (hands and feet) secured to keep from slipping or falling. When exiting a truck, for example, one hand on the cab handle, one hand gripping interior door handle and one foot on a step while the other foot is in transition, by doing this you always maintain three points of contact.

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### **Have you prepared your terminal for the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend?**

It is not uncommon for thieves to target truck terminals over the holidays as they know it is a good opportunity as there is no one there. Make sure that you take extra precaution to secure the trucks and items of value at your terminal. If your units do not have anti-siphon devices or locking caps instruct the drivers not to fill the units at the end of the day. Make



sure that all security alarms and security lighting is in working order. Walk the perimeter of the lot to make sure that security fencing is in good condition. Move units and all other material such as pallets, tires, etc far enough away from the fence so they cannot be used to climb on to get over the fence. Consider blocking the entrance and exits to the lot so units cannot be stolen. Throughout the four day weekend assign management personnel to check the terminal randomly. Using a little prevention and common sense can deter a thief from striking your facility.

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### **2015 FMCSA Large Truck & Bus Statistics Pocket Guide**

Please find the following link to the 2015 FMCSA Large Truck & Bus Statistics Pocket Guide published earlier this year. The document is full of valuable facts and information.

[Click here](#) to download the Pocket Guide

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