

How To React in a Truck Fire

Of all the hazards you can encounter on the road, one of the most dangerous — and scariest — are fires.

They happen more often than you might think, often with devastating results. But when you know when to do in a truck fire, you can protect yourself and your vehicle from injury or damage.

Large trucks accounted for more than 15,000 vehicle fires each year between 2018-22, according to the [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#). Most (77%) occur on the highway. Here are the top causes, plus tips on how to respond safely.

Top Causes of Truck Fires

Mechanical failure is the leading cause, responsible for 44% of all truck fires, says the NFPA. Other common culprits include:

- Underinflated tires or dual tires that touch
- Short circuits from loose electrical connections
- Fuel fires caused by spilled fuel, loose fuel lines or smoking
- Cargo fires due to improperly sealed or loaded freight

How To Prevent Truck Fires

Always carry a fire extinguisher. Extinguishers are mandatory for all commercial vehicles per [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#) regulations. The extinguisher's gauge needle should be in the green zone. Recharge extinguishers after each use and at least once every six years.

Perform routine preventive maintenance to keep brakes, fuel lines and electrical systems in good working order. Pre-trip inspections can also detect touching tires, brake issues and worn fuel lines. Report any defects to your carrier immediately.

What To Do if Your Rig Catches Fire

If you smell burning or see smoke or flames in your mirrors, stay calm and act quickly.

Turn on your hazard lights to let other drivers know you're slowing down.



Pull off the road safely. Use the shoulder if available. Otherwise, find an open area away from trees, buildings, brush, or other vehicles. Do not pull into a service station or truck stop.

Bring the rig to a full stop. Engage the parking brake, turn off the engine, and exit your truck. If it's safe, grab your phone and a fire extinguisher.

Move to safety and call 911 to report the fire and your location. Then notify your dispatcher.

Try to extinguish the fire if it's safe to do so. Stand upwind and use the PASS method:

- Pull the pin
- Aim at the base of the fire, not the flame
- Squeeze the trigger
- Sweep the extinguisher from side-to-side

Watch closely. Fires can reignite even after flames die out.