

Inches from Danger: Keeping Tow Truck Drivers Safe on the Roadside

Troy Caldwell had over 30 years of towing experience when he was struck by a semi truck while recovering a vehicle on a major interstate. Tow truck drivers face significant risks on a daily basis while working to keep roadways safe. Employers and policymakers can take action to keep workers safer on the roadway.

The Challenge

Tow truck drivers are often working on the roadside, sometimes inches away from high-speed traffic. This leaves them extremely vulnerable to being struck by passing vehicles. Three tow truck drivers were struck by vehicles and killed on roadsides in Kentucky in 2024 and 2025.

The Response

In response to the recent struck-by deaths of tow truck drivers, the Kentucky Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) program set out to develop updated resources for the existing Tow Truck Roadside Safety Toolkit. The new materials include a hazard alert, an in-depth fatality investigation report, and a video. The Hazard Alert, *Tow Truck Drivers Struck by Vehicles*, summarizes three cases in Kentucky where tow trucks were struck by vehicles and provides prevention recommendations to prevent similar incidents when working on the roadside. The investigation report, *Tow Truck Driver Struck by Passing Semi-Truck on Shoulder*, details a 2024 incident where a veteran tow truck driver, Troy Caldwell, was struck by a passing semi-truck while attempting to step down from the driver's side of the rollback platform. In addition to the report, the video, *KY FACE Story: Tow Truck Driver Struck by Passing Semi-Truck on Shoulder*, dives deeper into this incident with interviews from Troy's employer and a family member. Both the report and video include prevention recommendations for employers and a policy recommendation of allowing tow truck drivers in Kentucky to use blue and/or red flashing emergency lights to increase tow truck visibility and driver awareness.



Jerry Cantrell, owner of Jerry's Towing & Recovery

"Thanks for the help with getting our story out to the towing community. The report and video have been a great aid with the law change we are seeking."

—**Jerry Cantrell**, Jerry's Towing & Recovery

The Impact

The new tow truck safety resources were posted to the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center website and were distributed to towing trade organizations and companies. The hazard alert and the investigation report were featured in *Safety+Health* magazine, which has more than 92,000 subscribers. The video has almost 900 views. The materials have been utilized by a group of tow truck drivers in Kentucky advocating for policy change to allow additional colored lights to be used by tow truck drivers in the state. The bill, referred to as 'Troy's Law', passed the Kentucky House of Representatives in March 2026.

For more information, visit the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center website:

<https://kiprc.uky.edu/programs/kentucky-occupational-safety-and-health-surveillance-koshs-program/training-tools/tow-truck-roadside-safety-toolkit>