

# Crimes Against Women Drivers

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According to an Ohio sheriff's report, on a January '06 night at a large truckstop, a woman driver was attacked and beaten by two males with a 2x4 and robbed of a couple of cubic zirconia rings. From other reports, this is not an isolated incident. We hear these stories and wonder how and why this could have happened. Shouldn't we be safe at least at truck stops that we have to frequent at all hours?

Truckers have always been targets of crime, robbery and high jacking for the most part. In today's world little has changed other than according to the ATA's figures 7% (at least) of truckers are women, adding rape, sexual harassment and domestic abuse to the crimes against truckers.

Due to urban sprawl, truck stops that were once located in the country or at the very edge of town have now more than likely become encompassed by the city. They no longer cater to predominately truckers, but have become 'travel plazas' with 24 hour fast food joints that are frequented by all types of people at all hours of the day and night. Due to higher expenses, many have limited lighting and no longer have security or surveillance of their parking lots and fuel islands.

Driver's habits have changed also. In the old days on nice nights, drivers would gather on the lot to visit or cook out providing many eyes to see what was going on. We paid attention to what was going on around the parking areas, today, we have become more isolated, staying in our trucks using the computer, watching television or playing games. We tend to stay in the sleeper more than we used to. The new HOS have added to this. More drivers come into a truck stop and stay for 8-10 hours at a time instead of a steady in and out of traffic all night. With anti idling laws becoming more prevalent added to high fuel costs, more drivers are turning off their trucks, so even the ambient light of a truck's marker lights is lost.

One might ask who commits these crimes? The answer is complexly simple: lots of people and it could be anyone! The two guys mentioned attacking the lady driver in the opening paragraph are thought to be two drivers targeting women drivers. Sadly, there are still a very few male drivers that still resent women coming into trucking as drivers and may use criminal acts to dissuade them from remaining in it.

Drug use is rampant in all areas and can lead to increased robberies and burglaries. The increasing lack of good paying jobs can lead weak people to choose the 'easy way' to make a living by robbing others. Gangs are becoming more common even in smaller communities and may decide to 'prove' themselves by attacking a 'big, bad trucker' even a female one. Women historically have been easy targets for crime. Viewed as the 'weaker' gender, we represent easy prey. Two things we women do in general mark us; we tend to carry hand bags that are easily snatched and wear flashy, though not always, expensive looking jewelry. Hand bags usually contain our billfolds, credit cards and cash, and jewelry is easily fenced. Even cubic zirconia will bring a buck or two in a pawn shop.

As more of us choose to run solo, lady drivers will increasingly be the targets of crime. Though it has been covered before, the things you can do to protect yourself bears repeating.

Choose your parking spots and stops wisely. If you have to stop at an unwell lit truck stop, pull through the fuel islands and take care of any business you might have inside quickly before parking unless there are front row parking spots available. Save the showers and eating for daylight hours.

Only walk your pet in well lit areas.

Carry a hip pocket billfold or wallet instead of a hand bag.

Save the expensive looking jewelry for day light hours if you have to wear it at all, or when you are going to be going to and from the truck stop with another driver.

Never sleep where you get a cash advance or use the ATM.

Don't advertise where you are stopping to sleep or what type of load you have on your truck.

Be aware and alert to your surroundings. Before getting out of your truck, sit for a minute or two and look around. See who is moving around. Watch for any four wheelers in the truck parking areas. If anything seems suspicious, stay in your truck.

Keep your doors locked even if you are sitting in the seat.

Don't carry big amounts of cash or flash money when you get it from the cashier or ATM.

When you are walking across the lot, keep your head up and your eyes moving. Walk confidently and quickly. Don't stop to visit on the lot at night.

Carry identification with you at all times, CDL and any qualification cards you have identifying the company you work for.

There are no guarantees that you won't become a victim of crime either on the road at home, but an ounce of prevention may be worth a ton of cure. Be safe out there!