

How to Protect Yourself from Male Drivers & Trainers

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It's hard for me to imagine that there are still male drivers and male driver trainers out there that take advantage of their female co-drivers and most of all our new female driver candidates. I know that this is true and that women still are victimized and will continue to be victimized until we take a stand against this. I know it takes place because I've seen it happen first hand, myself, when I was on the road and as a policeman. I have reported these types of incidents which I have witnessed and contacted the local authorities. I have also provided many statements to police to assist in the prosecution of these offenders and when they find out I was a Detective most of them plead guilty to the charge to save further embarrassment. I am also aware that this has taken place with driver trainers and their victim driver candidates because as a Recruiter I network with a great many carriers and I have been told many stories.

I want everyone who reads this article to know I don't have all the answers and there is no sure way to prevent an attacker from making you his victim. These ideas and suggestions are only that, they may work for you or they may not but you have to do "something" to protect yourself from these kinds of offenders. I have used most of these ideas myself when I was driving because I had to take my own safety measures to return home safe. I also took these ideas from experiences with other men and women drivers. Some of these experiences were from my days as a police officer as a Detective with the Ontario Provincial Police.

Now, having just said this, there are more good male drivers out there, than not, who are polite and courteous to all drivers and have accepted everyone into the trucking industry. Unfortunately "it only takes a few bad apples to spoil the pie." We work in an industry that has been male dominant for many years and some of them are threatened by change or just plain don't want the female drivers on the same road with them. This has to change. Just listen to the CB and you can tell right away what kind of men are out there. Then there are the other male drivers out there which welcome the female drivers and respect them because of their desire to drive and the skill set they have learned with driving and dealing with the open road. I personally know many female drivers that would stack them up against any male driver any time and produce better results.

In the area of male driver trainers taking advantage of a female driver candidate, who only wants to have the same opportunities for her as a man has, this is more of a serious crime as the trainer can decide his "crime scene" if he decides to attack, assault or belittle his victim. He not only assaults his victim but she is now in a "forcible confinement" situation. This is also an offense against the Criminal Code of Canada. He thinks since there are no witnesses he can't be charged, WRONG. You have to remember, in Canada, you do not need to touch someone in order to be assaulted. You need only to imply you could carry out your assault and that your victim believes you are capable of carrying out with the assault. An example of this is if you clench your fist closed and pull your

arm back in a punching stance and the victim shields her face the assault has already happened and no contact has every occurred.

Victims don't realize that you may not be the only victim by this male driver or male trainer and you could be getting yourself into a more serious situation so it needs to be reported to the police a.s.a.p. The police will take greater action and investigate the occurrence better than the carrier will so as not to bring attention to themselves. A lot of carriers will try to sweep it under the rug and then there are the carriers who will do the right thing. Most carriers will let you know when you are hired that they have a non-harassment or non-discrimination policy, so read it and re-read it often. It's there for a reason, so don't be afraid to use it. The policy is there because it probably took place at that same carrier it is being offered or they know it happens and want to prevent it from every happening there so they did something about and made people aware of it.

What can you do if it happens to you? Are there ways of preventing it from happening? The answer is "yes." The easiest way to prevent this from happening to you is DON'T LET YOURSELF BECOME A VICTIM. What I mean by this is never put yourself in a vulnerable situation that leaves you alone at anytime or for any great lengths of time. I worked with another police officer who carried a manikin beside him on the passenger side of the cruiser, during midnight shift, just so he could show the criminals there were two people in the car. This was a deterrent and was something he used to get home safe in the morning to his family. I am not saying you should do the same but you need to figure out what makes you safe. How many times have you seen a cruiser parked on the side of the highway with nobody in it? It still helps slow down the traffic doesn't it. It's the image you portray that will help you be safe. You can slow down or eliminate the opportunity for a person to strike.

ALONE stands for: Awareness, Life, Options, Never give up and Escape.

Even in a road test capacity ask for a female trainer if they have one, or ask if you can take someone with you. Many carriers do not have women trainers and even discourage women from coming into their company. This is an indicator to be aware that a problem could arise. If a female trainer can't be provided "Don't get in that truck." This is simple because it could put you in a very compromising position and the opportunity for an attack to occur could occur. If this carrier won't let you take a passenger or doesn't have a female trainer, move on to another carrier.

I heard of a carrier, not so long ago, which didn't have any female trainers and actually sent a male trainer with a female trainee in a bunk truck and the two of them were out on the road for several days at a time for their training sessions. Now, tell me that this doesn't have "disaster" written all over it in most cases. You do the math.

Years ago when I started policing the Criminal Code of Canada said you needed a witness to the crime of sexual assault. Today the law is different, a person can be charged with a sex crime by accusation only. In domestic violence the police officer only needs

“reasonable grounds to believe” that an assault took place and they can arrest the suspect even if the spouse doesn’t want him charged. Don’t put yourself in a position to be taken advantage of because if you do you could become his victim before you know it.

The attacker only needs ability and opportunity to effect his purpose. Try and have someone with you at all times. I know this is easier said than done but if you are alone with the trainer make sure you can be heard. If the situation calls for it “just start screaming,” make noise, blow a whistle, blow the horn continuously, have your window down before hand, jump if necessary, pull his hair, poke your fingers in his eyes, hit him in his jugular vein (throat), kick him in the groin, do something to draw attention to the truck and give yourself an opportunity to get away. You know who he is so don’t wait around for an autograph. Go and Get Help. The police use a saying “I’d rather be judged by twelve, than carried by six” this means I’d rather be judged by a jury of twelve for my action(s) or laid to rest by six pallbearers.

There is nothing better than having a credible witness with you. It no longer becomes his word against yours. At truck stops, park in a lighted area as close to the building as possible, talk to other female drivers earlier and plan to meet at the same truck stop, wait for her out on the road and park together at a set time. Ask drivers you know and trust what kind of place this truck stop is before going there, watch your surroundings, any lot lizards, people going from one truck to another, vehicles in the area a truck stop is for trucks, people coming to your door selling stuff, don’t answer, don’t acknowledge them. Once you are at the truck stop with or without your female friend mind your own business and don’t divulge any information to anyone and watch for people watching you or appear to be interested especially when you are on the phone calling home. Make sure you have a code word for whoever you are talking to know that something is wrong. Make sure you have a contact person at home that you call once or twice daily and who knows where you are heading. If they don’t get your call at a specific time make sure your contact calls the police right away don’t wait. Too many people wait too long to start the process of looking for someone before it’s too late. Make sure your contact knows the carrier you are driving for and the phone number and contact name of a person that knows who and where you are. Make sure your contact has the license plate numbers of both truck and trailer. This information can be given out on the police radio right away in locating you and your truck. If it’s a false alarm, so what! I am telling you that you have to think ahead of time what the police would ask your next of kin to assist with the search. Give your contact a recent photo of yourself so you can fax it to the police station if they request it. Most police stations both in Canada and the States will put out an A.P.B (all points bulletin) on someone right away and e-mail your photograph to eliminate the possibility of having the situation become worse.

Make sure your contact knows your contingency plan for emergencies. Sound crazy - think about it. If getting away from your attacker is possible what would you do, i.e., call police, hide in the trees, make noise whatever it takes until its safe to come out and get help, or find a phone or have one with you. Remember that whenever you leave your truck, either at a rest area, a truck stop, or bathroom break, make sure when you

leave your truck pretending that you can't go back to it. I did this as a driver every time I got out and every time I got close to crossing the bridge at a border I always put my coat on which had my driver's license, money, house keys, change for a phone and plenty of identification in all different parts of my body just in case something happened while outside the truck.

One last thing, think about it, your truck is your home for whatever time you are away from the real one. Your home is where you know it to be most safe, in most cases. The only time you need to get out of your truck, ever, is if you are requested by bridge authorities or police. The trucks today are equipped with or can be improvised to be equipped so that you never have to leave that truck at all. Even a bathroom break can be improvised in a truck and stored away until later disposal. If you have to get out of the truck at a customer, make it quick, do your paperwork, don't socialize, there are eyes everywhere, don't use their facilities unless it's absolutely necessary, all paperwork can be done in the truck including everything else. This is an opportunity for bad things to happen. Lock the door behind you, right away, because you could be followed, don't wait and know approximately what time you will be leaving because if someone knocks on your door four hours early, you know, something could be wrong. Don't open yourself to any opportunity to be taken advantage of.

If I can leave you with this important piece of information, most male offenders who attack, assault, insult, humiliate a woman, it is not about "gratification" for what they are doing, but about POWER and CONTROL.