

Socializing on the Road

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Drivers are probably some of the loneliest people on the road. We leave our friends and families behind when we climb into our rigs and head out. We may be gone for weeks at a time before we see the house again and it gets darned lonely.

It is easy to strike up a conversation with other drivers at times...in the truckstop while laid over, while waiting at docks and sometimes at the fuel islands. The weather, construction, pets, our trucks, families and dispatchers are always on our minds so those topics are usually what we talk about at first.

Most of our brother drivers are nice guys who are just as lonely as we are, but there are that certain percentage that you need to watch out for. You cannot tell a book by it's cover, nor a jerk by his looks, but there are warning signs. If:

He cannot look you in the eye cause his eyes are focused on your chest...

His first words are "Hey baby..."

He asks in the second sentence if you party...

He talks about sex after 5 minutes of conversation...

He patronizes you by saying things like--"what's a little lady like you doing out here driving that big ol' truck, you shouldn't be out here on the road, you should have some good man to take care of you"...

He tells vulgar (not to be confused with cute) jokes right after he sits down at the counter...

He treats the waitress, female cashier / shipping or receiving clerk badly...he is most probably a jerk.

If you find a jerk, then excuse yourself as gently as you can or as forcefully as you need to and leave his vicinity. There is always someplace else you need to be or something that you have to do that you can use as an excuse to get away from him.

The other type of person you have to watch out for are predators. These people fortunately make up a very small percentage of the population, but you never know when you will run into one and they can be male or female. These are the truly evil people in the world, the robbers, rapists and yes, even murderers. There are not often any signals that these people are evil; most times, they are very smooth and charming until they lull you into a false sense of security.

There are some hard and fast rules to follow to protect yourself from these types:

Never sleep where you get your money...get your cash advance or hit the atm during the day and then go somewhere else to sleep.

Never allow a stranger (besides police or mechanics) into your truck.

Never talk about how much money you have on you.

Do not announce your location where you are parked or going to sleep.

Never climb up into a stranger's truck for any reason...unless you are helping a driver get his pin pulled and he has you rock the truck while he pulls on the lever. (Most guys will have a lady do that instead of the more physical lever pulling...I know, but it is a guy thing!)

Never walk around the back sides of your or his/her truck with a stranger specially at night.

Never sit in the truckstop and tell what your truck looks like.

Doing the above are no guarantee that you will not become a target, but at least you aren't putting the target on your own back.

Drivers have many problems, work, family, companies and stress take up most of our waking thoughts and we tend to talk about our problems whenever we find a willing ear. Sometimes we need the opposite sex's take on a problem we might be having, sometimes a guy just misses his wife so much that he will talk to any woman he can find. Learn good conversationalist skills and how to turn a conversation to another topic if need be.

Listen carefully to what someone is talking about.

Make appropriate responses, try not to get into 'uhuh' mode.

Carry photos of your kids if you have them, or nieces/nephews so you have something to 'show and tell.'

Read the newspaper or listen to the news so you have something to talk about.

Ask questions about something you want to learn about or about experiences someone might have had, ie: prettiest part of the country, worse snow storms/shippers/receivers, funniest things someone might have seen along the road, etc.

Socializing on the road can be fun and informative. I have spent many an hour just listening to a group of drivers talk about trucking with just a question thrown in once in awhile to keep them on topic, and have learned a lot by doing so. I have made lasting friendships on the road that started with a chance meeting at the counter drinking coffee. You can too, just watch yourself and conduct yourself appropriately.