



PROPER *You Need A Light Touch* BRAKING

Nothing on your truck is more important than the brakes. You can have a powerful, smooth-running and efficient rig to haul the load, but it won't mean much if you can't stop when you need to.

Your brakes are your best friends when you're on the road, and you should get to know them well. Understand how they work, keep them in good running order and know how to use them to your best advantage.

Take Care of Your Brakes

It's crucial to keep your brakes adjusted and in proper balance. A federal study estimated that half the trucks on the road were operating with at least one air brake out of adjustment.

Every pre-tip inspection calls for a thorough check of your brakes and air lines. Check slack adjusters often, especially if you've just gone through a hilly section of road. Be sure your trailer brakes always take hold a split second sooner than the tractor brakes. Get them adjusted immediately if they don't. You're in serious danger of jackknifing if the timing is wrong.

Use Them Less, Not More

The best way to use your brakes is as little and lightly as possible. They'll last longer and serve you best if you don't overwork them.

Better to drive cautiously, maintain a reasonable speed, keep a sharp eye out for hazards and follow other vehicles at a safe distance. With that kind of common sense approach, you can avoid most situations which

would require you to use the full power of your braking system.

Gear down on hills or in heavy traffic situations to avoid excessive braking. Avoid the habit of using your brakes constantly. It can sap the air pressure to a point where it's critically low when you need it most.

Easy Does It

When you do have to step on the brakes, the most effective technique is to step on them firmly, then ease up as soon as your rig begins to slow down. By the time you come to a halt, you should be applying minimum pressure to the brake pedal.

The worst thing you can do with your brakes is to slam them on in panic. It locks up your wheels, robs you of all steering control and sends you into a straight-line skid, aimed right at the very target you want to avoid.

Steer out of skids and stay off the brakes. Better yet, avoid them by knowing in advance how hard you can step on your brakes without locking them up. In a tight situation, keep your eyes on an escape route, rather than the hazard itself, and rely on your steering to get you out of the jam.

If you have time, you can stab your brakes once to reduce your speed before you swerve, but you may not have time. Even in emergencies, the best rule of thumb is to use your brakes as little and as lightly as possible.