

# UPS Honors Safe Driver

*Ginny Odom is a UPS driver with 35 years' experience and the most years of safe driving among women drivers at UPS. She is also a member of UPS's Circle of Honor, which recognizes drivers who have achieved 25 years or more of safe driving.*

*In this interview, Odom explains how UPS driver safety has improved since she began her career with the company in 1973, and she discusses the safe driving habits she uses both on and off the job.*

**TransActions:** Please provide a brief history of your career with United Parcel Service (UPS). Why did you join UPS and what made you stay?

**GO:** I was raised on a farm in Tennessee with three brothers, so being outdoors was an important part of determining my career choice. Growing up, I lasted one day working in a factory. In another attempt to make a living, I worked behind a parts counter at a boat shop and was again deprived of my love of the outdoors. So, when I landed a job at UPS where I could be outside all day, I knew this would be the career for me.

**TransActions:** Based on your 35 years of experience with UPS, what do you consider the most significant changes or improvements made in UPS driver safety?

**GO:** The safe driving methods taught at UPS have not changed over the years. We have always followed UPS's driver training using the 5-Seeing Habits and 10-Point Commentary.

In 1996, UPS engaged our driver groups in the Comprehensive Health and Safety Process (CHSP). All of our facilities have committees chaired by both management and hourly employees. Employee involvement has been a driving force for safety improvements in employee injury and auto accident frequencies.

**TransActions:** You are a member of UPS's Circle of Honor Program, which rewards UPS

drivers who have achieved 25 years or more of safe driving. What does this recognition mean to you?

**GO:** We have an elite group of professional drivers at UPS. Recognition for these accomplishments is a big honor because it requires much hard work. With nearly 5,000 Circle of Honor drivers within the company, you can paint a picture for the longevity of the employees and that demonstrates our people's commitment.

**TransActions:** When you began your career with UPS in 1973, you drove delivery trucks before switching to big rigs. Since 1983, you have driven a tandem tractor-trailer rig or "feeder." In what ways did you need to adjust your driving skills when you made the switch from delivery trucks to big rigs? How have UPS vehicles in general changed over the years in light of new fleet technologies and improved vehicle safety?

**GO:** Driving a tractor-trailer is much different from driving a package car, but UPS trained me. It takes more time to stop a tractor-trailer, you need more space to turn it, you need to know how to hook up the trailers properly, etc. For me, I just got in the package car and went. There is much more to pay attention to in a feeder.

UPS has focused more on fuel efficiency over the years with things like idling reduction and reducing excess miles. We were also the first



*"This has been a great career for me. Nothing is better than the security of working for a company that provides that kind of job security."*



delivery company to place an order for hydraulic hybrid vehicles in 2008.

I think our vehicles are safer because of new technology. They have improved braking systems, and Automotive can diagnose the vehicles using computers. With this technology, the Preventive Maintenance Inspection (PMI) identifies potential concerns before a problem happens on the road.

**TransActions:** *You drive 600 miles roundtrip between Orlando, FL, and Cordele, GA, each day. How do you address issues such as road congestion and construction or any other unexpected changes in your route?*

**GO:** I take my time when I am backing and I keep a good following distance—even though it is hard when people cut you off. Another thing high on my safety checklist is to watch ramps in busy areas. The potential for incidents is high in these areas. We have a network of drivers on the road, so we keep one another informed about potential hazards. We stay alert and deal with the situation at hand.

**TransActions:** *How has the U.S. Department of Transportation's recent federal ban on texting for commercial truck and bus drivers impacted UPS drivers? What guidelines or rules does UPS already have in place to prevent driving distractions?*

**GO:** I am amazed at the number of people texting while driving. When you are sitting up so high on the road, you can see what other people are doing in their vehicles. We have a policy against all in-cab distractions. We keep both hands on the wheel and our eyes on the road as professional drivers, so this new legislation was not something that caused us to change our safe driving practices.

**TransActions:** *What was the most unusual or humorous situation you have encountered in your career as a UPS driver?*

**GO:** I had a good laugh one day when I was heading down the inter-

state and the police had pulled over a family in a minivan. It looked like the family was moving and everything they owned was strapped to the vehicle. Chairs were tied upside down to the side of the van with boxes placed inside the chair legs. They made the Clampett's from The Beverly Hillbillies look like they had nothing on their car when they headed for Beverly Hills.

Another funny incident was witnessing a motorist speeding through Florida. I saw him get pulled over three times. I passed him once in Florida when he was stopped. Then I passed him again when he was pulled over at the Florida/Georgia border. And, then he was pulled over a third time in Georgia. I could not believe it. I cannot imagine what he was telling the officers.

**TransActions:** *How has your experience as a UPS driver made you a better driver off the job?*

**GO:** I certainly use the same safe driving methods in my personal life as I do at work. I do not run up on red lights—rather I coast as I approach the light. I always clear my intersections before going through them. You need to watch for red-light runners before you pull through an intersection. After all these years, safe driving is a habit that is instilled in me.

## UPS's Five Seeing Habits

- 1) Aim high in steering.
- 2) Get the big picture.
- 3) Keep your eyes moving.
- 4) Leave yourself an out.
- 5) Make sure they see you.

**TransActions:** *What advice do you have for women who wish to become drivers for large package delivery companies such as UPS?*

**GO:** I would tell women that this is hard work and you must pull your weight. It is a good career. I never regretted my career decision and do not feel like I gave anything up that would have suited me better.

**TransActions:** *What do you believe is the single greatest benefit of being a UPS driver?*

**GO:** This has been a great career for me. I was a single mom with two young girls when I started my career here. I was able to earn a good living and to provide a good life for my family. Nothing is better than the security of working for a company that provides that kind of job security. ☺

## Safety Belt Usage Up in 2009

New Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration data show that 74% of commercial truck and bus drivers are using their safety belts. Only 65% of drivers were using safety belts in 2007.

A total of 20,818 commercial drivers operating medium- to heavy-duty trucks and buses were observed at 827 roadside sites nationwide for the survey. Findings include:

- Safety belt use for both commercial drivers and their occupants was higher at 78% in states where law enforcement

may stop drivers for not wearing a safety belt, versus 67% in states with weaker belt use laws.

- Commercial drivers for regional or national fleets showed higher safety belt use at 78%, versus 64% for independent owner-operators.

- Safety belt use rates for commercial drivers and their occupants were highest at 79% in the West, compared with 75% in the South, 68% in the Midwest and 64% in the Northeast.

For more information, visit <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt>. ☺