

Respecting Others, Respecting Yourself

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Back in the '70's & '80's, women came into the trucking industry in increasing numbers as solo drivers mainly due to the anti discrimination laws. The divorce rate was rising also, causing more women to seek ways of making enough money to survive as singles. Trucking was attractive to us because of the money to be made, much more money than waiting tables or being a secretary.

Traditionally considered a 'man's job', trucking always had women drivers though almost all ran team with husbands and family members. With the influx of women entering the industry, many male drivers felt threatened and thought that women were taking a job from a man with a family to support. Some of these men resorted to violence to try to stop women from driving truck, most settled for severe verbal abuse with a little sabotage thrown in.

We lady drivers, that started then, had to work twice and thrice as hard as the men to prove we could do the job. We never knew when we would be harassed, threatened or actually injured by some guy that thought we should be at home instead of in that truck. Most of us persevered though, standing our ground, running hard, delivering on time, taking it on the chin, asking for no quarter. We worked hard, and we played hard too, we were discrete about it though. By our actions, forcing companies and our male counterparts to consider women drivers as valuable professionals, we broke the ground for women coming into the industry, making trucking an easier career to follow now.

Sadly, that positive image of lady drivers we fought so hard to achieve, is slowly being eroded by the actions of a few of the women entering the industry. We are seeing some companies that find excuses to not hire women drivers even though the lady drivers inquiring are experienced with clean records, and newer male drivers are showing little or no respect for lady drivers. Why is this you might ask? It goes back to when women started into the industry in part.

Back then, companies thought that women were physically weak and couldn't do the job. The male management thought that women would be unavailable due to monthly body functions or would be too emotional during these times and thought that all women were wanting to drive truck to find husbands to support them. They also thought that women were less responsible than men and wouldn't be able to keep up to schedules. Some companies and male drivers thought that women who drove truck were only there to serve their sexual needs.

In the last 10 years, I have seen many women drivers who exhibit a total lack of self respect for themselves. How are they doing this? Turn on the CB close to any major truck stop and you are likely hear at least one woman driver talking trash and in certain areas, working the lot at night. Pay attention while going down the road and there are women drivers who 'flash (or worse)' their male peers. Both of those activities promote the belief that women drivers are here to serve the males in a sexual manner.

In the last year, I have seen at least five women drivers go up to a male driver and not just ask him to watch her blind side into a dock or parking space, but to actually ask the male to get in her truck and back it in for her! Many of my male friends that pull flats relate that they are seeing more females pulling flats that cannot or will not secure their own loads or throw their

tarps, instead either asking a man to do it or putting on suggestive clothing to attract assistance.

I know personally of one woman who is in a lease purchase program that sat for five days after turning down a load in a dead freight area because it went where she didn't want to go. Then after she finally accepted a load, got to the town she was going to a day early and told dispatch she couldn't load for a day after she delivered because she had to do laundry. It gets better! After loading the load after that, she laid over three days so she could meet some guy that she had found on the internet and then during the next load, she had to call dispatch and reschedule her delivery appointment because it was the wrong time of the month! This all happened in a 30 day period.

Please show some self respect if you are going to drive truck. You are not only representing your company and yourself, but you are representing all of us that made it possible for you to be out there in a truck. By not conducting yourself as a professional and a lady, you show disrespect for all professional lady drivers and make it hard for them to be respected in return, but most of all, you are contributing to the negative image of the trucking industry current in the media and the public's minds.

Respect is gained through having the self respect to do the job and do it well. Think about the job. If you can do it, but only need a little help at a particular time, then by all means ask for it. If you cannot do all aspects of the trucking job you have taken, then find another job to do whether in the industry or out. If you are not out here to make a good living and are only looking for fun and games, then please, go home and get a day job. Leave trucking to those of us who love it and do it proudly and professionally.