

Trucks in the fast lane

The costs and benefits of trucks overtaking each other are totally disproportionate.

Although road transport is responsible for about 20% of CO₂ emissions, there are no standards for greenhouse gas emissions even till today. This has led to companies like Nestlé, Philips or DB Schenker writing to the EU requesting that such standards be introduced in the next two years. The focus here is on the reduction of fuel consumption, which can save a company as much as USD 10,000 per truck per year.

The Swiss Commercial Vehicle Association, ASTAG, has already reacted with the offer of a corresponding training product. QualiDrive is intended to reduce fuel consumption and promote sustainability. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is by an improved driving style. The initial experiences with QualiDrive are promising. One transport operator reports annual savings in fuel of 200,000 litres and a reduction of CO₂ emissions by more than 535 tons.

In practice, this knowledge has unfortunately, still not received the universal attention it deserves.

Presumably, the low price of diesel price led to trucks being seen in the fast lane more frequently. It is frequently unrecognized that the costs and benefits of trucks during the course of overtaking manoeuvres are totally disproportionate. The time saved over a stretch of 100km, driving at a speed of 88km/h instead of 80km/h is just 6 minutes. The diesel consumption however increases by 11% with a proportionate increase in environmental pollution.

Truck A 80km/h - Truck B 88km/h = 6 minutes faster + 11% more diesel

A truck travelling at 88 km/h requires a stretch of 1.5 kilometres to complete an overtaking manoeuvre of a truck travelling at 80 km/h.

Truck A travelling at 80km/h is overtaken by Truck B travelling at 88km/h = 1500 m. in the left lane.

This results in an abrupt disturbance in the flow of traffic and the risk of accidents increases. Costs and emissions increase disproportionately. Neither does this do any good to the company image. In addition, it remains unclear what the impact of this behaviour will be on the fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions of passenger cars, which accelerate again on completion of the overtaking manoeuvre.

Competition in the transport sector has been intense for several years; the price pressure high and the returns low. It is desirable that the managements of transport companies keep an increasingly watchful eye on the driving style of their drivers.

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