

FOLLOWING – AVOIDING UFO’S

We tend to think of broken windshields and broken windows on our vehicles as an inexpensive, minor kind of damage (in spite of the down time for the repair), and so we don't pay too much attention to them. But in fact, a broken windshield may be the *cause* of a more serious accident rather than the *result*.

Many people think there is nothing that can be done to prevent glass breakage. But often the break that occurs while the vehicle is moving is a break that could have been avoided.

Following distance may be a factor. A large vehicle restricting your ability to see ahead is not the only reason to increase distance behind it. Large vehicles, especially certain kinds, also may be expected to throw up debris more than other vehicles – debris that can break glass. Heavy vehicles, especially at high speeds, can throw up road debris very forcefully. And of course, many vehicles carry their own debris.

You should anticipate that any vehicle used on construction sites may have gravel caught in its undersides, pebbles in tire treads, and mud caked here and there that dries and flakes off as it travels. An open-bed vehicle such as a dump truck can be carrying its own UFO's -- "unanticipated flying objects."

Since the debris does not necessarily fly straight, all lanes can be thought of as target areas. It makes good sense to give those vehicles room and avoid putting yourself in the position of becoming a target for a UFO.

When you follow another vehicle too closely, you not only reduce your ability to see ahead and give yourself less reaction time than you might need, you also run the risk of being struck by a flying or falling object.

Chipped paint, dents, and broken windshields are the most common sorts of damage caused by these objects. But serious damage and injury can also result from being struck by an object thrown up or dropped off a vehicle in front of you. Cargo does fall from vehicles. Gravel, trash, equipment and other objects may fly out of the top of an open-bed truck. Stones or clumps of mud may loosen and come off a construction vehicle. Any car, bus, or truck may throw pebbles and other road debris up into the air. At higher speeds, large trucks are especially likely to pull large and dangerous



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objects into the slipstream behind them.

Anything that strikes your vehicle can damage it. More important, it can cause you to react in a way that leads to another accident, and serious injury.

So whenever you find yourself traveling behind a vehicle with an open bed, or open cargo doors, a construction-type vehicle, or simply one that is traveling fast, increase your following distance to avoid being struck.