

18 WHEELS OF TERROR

Whether you're driving a big rig, driving next to a big rig, or even walking around on top of a big rig, you're never far from danger. Here are some harrowing stories of survival.

B LINDED BY THE LIGHT

Colin Tandy was driving his truck up the appropriately named Tumbledown Bay Road in Marlborough, New Zealand, in 2011. It was dawn, and he was just coming around a curve when the rising sun blasted him in the eyes. He slammed on the brakes, but the truck slipped off the edge of the road and started falling down the heavily forested cliffside. "I actually remember rolling about four times," he said. "I knew the sea was down there, so I ripped off my seatbelt as I didn't want to drown." Tandy was thrown from the cab, which turned out to be a good thing because it was crushed. He didn't fare much better than the cab, though: He tore all of his lower back muscles, pulled five vertebrae, broke eight ribs and both hips, and split his pelvis. And he couldn't feel a thing below his waist. Doctors informed Tandy that he'd never walk again. They were wrong. Only a few days later, and before the first of many scheduled operations, he could feel his toes tingling. A few weeks later, he walked out of the hospital and has since made a full recovery. (Upon his release, he announced that he would compete on the *World's Toughest Trucker* reality TV show in his native England.)

FLAT ON THE FREEWAY

A rainy day in Los Angeles led to a horrific accident on a highway overpass. When rescue crews arrived, a semi that had skidded on the freeway was lying on its side. Witnesses shouted that there was a car stuck *under* the truck's trailer. With little hope for survivors, firefighters began emptying the trailer's heavy load while a crane was brought in to lift it up. When it finally did, the car's driver was still alive. After rescuers used the jaws of life to free him, to everyone's amazement, he actually climbed out of the crushed car on his own and started walking around. He didn't have a scratch. According to his doctor, "He's done remarkably well for somebody who spent that much time under a truck."

TWIST AND SHOUT

Jeremiah Morrison saw the tornado on the road ahead of him. He pulled his truck over on I-40 in central Oklahoma, and was about to get out and look for a ditch to take shelter in. Then Morrison lost sight of the tornado. Thinking it was gone, he reached for his seatbelt. All of a sudden the twister was right on top of him, lifting the truck off the ground and tearing it apart. "I felt myself bouncing around in the cab and somehow or other I went out the window," he recalled. His rig was demolished. Had Morrison succeeded in fastening his seatbelt, he most likely would have been demolished, too. Instead, all he received were a few bruises and a fractured shoulder.

FRUIT OF THE DOOM

While driving his big rig on a Pennsylvania highway in 2011, Richard Paylor, 55, started choking on an apple. He blacked out and then plowed into the concrete center divide. On impact, he was thrown forward into his steering wheel with such force that it dislodged the apple from his throat. Paylor's amazing story was confirmed when police found a chunk of regurgitated apple stuck to the semi's dashboard. "I guess it wasn't my time," he said.

BLOWUP

In 2011 Steven McCormack, a 48-year-old New Zealand truck driver, was getting his rig ready for a job. While climbing in between the cab and the trailer, he lost his footing and fell backward onto the hose that feeds compressed air into the brakes. The hose dislodged, and the nozzle pierced McCormack's left buttock. To his horror, he started filling up with pressurized air at 100 pounds per square inch! Unable to move, he screamed for help, but his workmates had a tough time reaching him. As his neck, hands, chest, and face were balling up to twice their normal size, he knew he was about to pop. Finally, someone shut off the air valve. McCormack was rushed to a hospital, where doctors were amazed to discover that many of his muscles had actually separated from the fat they were connected to. In addition, McCormack's skin was full of tiny bubbles. Doctors drained fluid from one of his lungs, but it took three days for him to return to his normal size. How? "I had to do a lot of burping and farting," he said.