

“KEEPING PACE” - #81

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TRUCK TIRE FIRE:

The photograph shows the remains of a brand new Freightliner semi-tractor. One of its front tires had blown out, and instead of stopping, the driver continued to drive the truck on the flat tire for what he claimed was a “hundred yards.” When he stopped, he got out of the truck and saw a little smoke emanating from the tire. He got back in the truck, and 45 minutes later a policeman and a fireman came along. They all saw a little smoke around the tire at that time, but no flames. The driver got back into his truck and went to sleep. After an hour, a passerby woke him and alerted him to a working fire, which was centered at the blown tire.

Driving on a flat truck tire causes very high frictional forces in the rubber due to the weight of the truck. The rubber is contorted in many different directions with each rotation of the wheel. Eventually, the heat in the rubber from the frictional forces will ignite the rubber. In this case, the fire smoldered in the rubber for almost two hours before a working fire erupted. I have had over four of these truck tire fire cases.

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DRAGGING BRAKE TOTALS TRUCK AND 9 FORD EXPLORERS:

In the background are the remains of nine Ford Explorers which were being transported by this semi-tractor trailer vehicle carrier, when one of the carrier's tires caught fire. The driver had failed to release the power-take-off switch on the dashboard of the truck. When the power-take-off is activated, it sets the air brakes on just one axle to hold the truck still, while vehicles are being moved on or off the truck.

The brake on one of the two wheels on this axle was malfunctioning due to a broken coil spring. Therefore, only the brake on one wheel remained activated as the driver drove 20 miles after picking up the Ford Explorers. When he stopped, he and two other truck drivers saw the fire begin at the tire with the dragging brake. I found those brake linings worn down to the rivets, while all the other brake linings were 5/8 inch thick. The fire totaled the entire semi-tractor trailer as well as the nine Ford Explorers.

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