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Creating safety on the roads; RCC's truck school builds better drivers

- Robert Alietti
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MEDFORD, Ore. - Rogue Community College is training the next generation of truck drivers with a focus on safety as wet weather approaches Southern Oregon.

The program emphasizes hands-on training and real-world experience from instructors who come from the trucking industry.

"All of our programs prioritize safety," said Lisa Parks, dean of business and workforce development. "We have the experience of a lot of our instructors who come from industry that are working with those students directly, not just for the formal pieces of curriculum, but like practicing."

Before students get behind the wheel, they learn to perform pre-trip inspections. Lead instructor Dennis Sauro said these checks are critical for safe operation.

"One of the first things we gotta get them to do, we gotta get them to do the pre-trips," Sauro said. "If you don't check this stuff, you're not running safe and just bad things end up happening."

The inspections cover mechanical parts ranging from the engine and brakes to transmission fluid and engine oil. Once drivers know what to look for, they begin driving training.

"Once you get in the truck and you're driving, you gotta work on keeping your proper distance, stay in your lane," Sauro said. "You gotta know how long is it gonna take to stop that truck at different speeds."

These skills are important to learn, especially with vehicles weighing different amounts and different road conditions. Sauro also shared advice for drivers of passenger cars to help keep everyone safe on the road.

"If you look and you can't see us in your mirror, we can't see you," Sauro said.

He explained that trucks have large blind spots. Drivers should give trucks extra space when passing.

"When you pass us, please move out further before you come over," Sauro said. "Say we got that 20 feet that we can't see, that's still not the safest place to be. At 30 feet or 40, depending on what speed you're going."

Parks said the program serves an important role in the community. The training supports the trucking industry and the jobs available in the region.

"It's not really about the competition of this education and this training," Parks said. "It's really in support of the industry and the jobs that we have and our community as a whole."

Many graduates find employment quickly after finishing the program. The jobs support both the graduates and the local economy.



VIDEO