

## Travel Troubles; Annoying to Dangerous

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We have what is usually just an annoying problem in the High Country—tractor trailer drivers taking what appears to be the shortest route, then finding the short-cut they're taking was not designed for long and wide vehicles. Weekly, there are trucks stuck on the switchback curves on such as Wilson's Ridge Road and others—and especially treacherous is NC 194 in a number of areas, but especially above Valle Crucis where recent improvements did not address switchback curves there. Yesterday, another aspect of ignoring signs for trucks not to use the route surfaced, with first responders heading to a stroke call finding a stuck tractor trailer between them and their patient. The first unit to come upon the truck called in the issue, causing the dispatch of another district's first responders to the initial call. Trooper Alexander, who responded to the stuck truck call, said that it took a large Hampton's wrecker quite some time to work the rig through the curve, but he said that there is little or nothing as far as citations for these drivers who take ill-advised routes.

The issue is taking on additional urgency in Avery, with NC 194 out due to last week's landslide that took out a large section of the three lane—a route favored by truckers. Reports from Avery say that a number of truckers are taking the detour over Blevins Creek, in some cases, running other traffic off of the winding—and also damaged road not meant for such heavy traffic. Avery officials are struggling with how to route school buses over the detour, with the yellow machines too heavy for the rating of the road. But now, school officials are saying they may need to send six buses over Blevins Creek while repairs are underway—repairs that may take months. For now, there is no solution for either large vehicle issue.

Photos from 2011 accident on NC 194