

## Are Spiked Wheel Ornaments a Safety Hazard?

Article By:

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While driving, you may occasionally notice protruding spike-like lug nut covers on the wheels of tractor-trailers. While usually made of plastic, these spikes may also be made of aluminum or metal. One hazard is that these spikes may extend out too far from the outer edge of the rim of the wheel and come into contact with other vehicles, including motorcyclists and bicyclists, or even pedestrians.

As I previously discussed in a [prior blog post](#), nearly half of bicyclists and one quarter of pedestrians who are killed by a large truck first impact the side of the truck. It is easy to see the increased danger of side impacts if the bicyclist, motorcyclist, or pedestrian makes contact with a wheel's spikes.

Concerns about the actual danger caused by the ornamental spikes may be compounded by the perceptions of other drivers, including those who are involved in crashes with tractor trailers. In a 2012 Louisiana [case](#) involving a car and a tractor-trailer, plaintiff described the tractor-trailer as having “spikes on the outer front wheel hubs.” These wheel ornaments may be distracting and intimidating to other drivers.

Hawaii recently passed [legislation](#) regulating tire wheel spikes. The statute bans “dangerous wheels”— including “any wheel, wheel cover, hubcap, lug nut cover or cap, prong, or any ornamentation affixed to any of the aforementioned items that extends at least four inches beyond the portion of the wheel rim that extends furthest away from the vehicle and that may cause injury or property damage by minimal contact with a person or object.” Some trucking companies ban the use of the ornamental wheel spikes to avoid the perception of aggressiveness or intimidation and to foster an image of focusing on courteous and safe driving.

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