

# Truckers – are you Thinking in the Zone?



TruckSure  
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Are you thinking in the 'zone' – the safety zone that is?

April and May are traditionally a couple of danger months when it comes to accidents and crashes. Don't really know why but perhaps it is the coming out of summer in anticipation of the colder winter months ahead – perhaps we are all a bit too relaxed!!.

I will be running a couple of articles in the safety theme just as a refresher.

This month I will look at the driver and vehicle before you hit the road – literally.

## Use '3-Points of Contact' when entering or exiting the truck cab

Getting in and out of a truck cab is a common action loaded with potential hazards. It is a leading cause of injury to truck drivers. Injuries include major shoulder, back and ankle pain and they can take a long time to heal. These injuries can be avoided by following the '3-points of contact' rule.

Put basically, the '3-points of contact' rule means three of your four limbs are in contact with the vehicle at all times – two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand. In other words, before you lift one of your legs to climb up on the truck, you must have both hands firmly grasping the vehicle to help pull yourself up. Before you let go of one of the hand holds when dismounting, you need to make sure that both feet are firmly planted on the ground.

Remember these simple rules and you will have substantially reduced any chance of injury when getting on (or in) as well as off (or out) of a vehicle or equipment. Slow down, think about what you are doing, and watch your step.

## Basic Shoulder Strengthening

Did you know that your shoulders are the most movable joints in your body? They also tend to be unstable at times because the ball of the upper arm is larger than the shoulder socket that holds it. The shoulder is stabilised by the muscles, tendons and ligaments that surround it. Knowing more about your shoulders and how to protect them will keep you healthier and more productive.

There are exercises that can be done to strengthen your shoulders and prevent injuries. Stretching with an elastic band, wall push ups, and shoulder press ups are the most useful. You should always check with your doctor if you have any questions about starting an exercise routine.

Shoulder injuries are common because we use our shoulders every day. The tasks of loading, unloading and lifting can cause stress to the shoulders. You can greatly minimise the risk or injury by using proper mechanics, lifting techniques and resting and stretching for periods when performing repetitive tasks.

## Practice Safety

While working be mindful that safe lifting practices and the use of safety equipment is the key to preventing shoulder injuries. Always make it a practice to:

- Hold an object close to the body when lifting to reduce the stress on the shoulders

- Use the arms and shoulders to raise a load when performing an overhead lift
- Be certain to rest the arms for short periods if you are loading and unloading constantly
- Break down a heavy load to make it more manageable to carry or handle
- Use safety equipment whenever possible to pull or push objects; make every attempt to avoid overexertion
- In the event of a fall, try rolling onto your back to reduce the impact on the shoulders

## Now is your truck In the Safety Zone?

Truck drivers must do their pre-trip and post-trip inspections every trip. Never let anything keep you from doing a thorough inspection. It only takes one minor malfunction to

turn into a major mishap. Be smart by preparing for your destinations from start to finish. You are much better off getting to your destination safely than not getting there at all!

## During the Pre-Trip Inspection

Before you start to drive off, you should confirm on the pre-trip checklist that the vehicle is roadworthy and safe to drive. It is always a good idea to document every inspection. Review the previous day's Driver Vehicle Inspection Report (DVIR) to ensure any defects that were noted during the previous trip were fixed or deemed not to be required for the safe operation of the vehicle.

Be thorough! Look under the bonnet and under the engine. Be alert for any leaks that may indicate trouble. Carefully check out all of your instruments to ensure they are functioning properly. Check out tyres for proper inflation. Leaks and tyre issues are the number one cause of downtime for any trucker.

Also, don't forget that load securement in pre-trip is your responsibility – even if you didn't load the trailer. Take your time to be sure the load is secure. And, if you are not driving the same truck every day, get familiar with the truck's instruments and gauges before you leave. Document and communicate any problems or hazards.

Remember, safe drivers will continue to check their vehicle while en route so that they know the condition of the tyre pressure, electrical system, brakes, operating temperatures.

Do a quick walk-a-round at each stop or delivery, etc.

## During Post-Trip Inspection

This report covers parts and accessories such as service brakes including trailer brake connections, parking brake, steering mechanism, lighting devices and reflectors, tyres, horn, windshield wipers, rear vision mirrors, coupling devices, wheels and rims, and emergency equipment.

While post-trip inspections may be tempting to avoid, especially if you're tired after a long haul, the consequences can be huge if they aren't completed. Learn how to do it quickly but thoroughly. View it as the completion of your trip.

That's it from me for now.

Drive safe – it's really up to you.



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