

Help your drivers keep on trucking with an improved health and safety program.

Drive your safety program home

By Gail Johnson

Motor vehicle incidents remain a top concern for B.C.'s commercial truck drivers. However, there's much more that could put workers at risk if prevention measures aren't put in place.

Sometimes everyday tasks can lead to injury. Cranking a truck's landing gear can lead to a knock to the head if the handle slips; pulling a release pin on a fifth wheel can jolt the back. Even something as simple as backing a truck underneath a trailer can do it: if you happen to hit the pin, it can lock and come to a dead stop and hurt your back. Those are just some of the possible injuries drivers face when they're not at the wheel.

Falls from height common injury for truck drivers

Overexertion and falls from heights are the second-most common injuries among truck drivers, after collisions. From 2009 to 2018, there were over 5,000 claims for overexertion and over 3,600 claims due to falls from elevation.

"There's always a risk of injury getting in and out of the truck — going from the seat of your truck all the way to the ground, especially if the steps are wet or icy or you have a bit of water or grease on your workboot," says

Larry Sargeant, business representative of Teamsters Local 31, who drove full-time for more than 20 years. "Hooking up your air lines and light plugs could lead to injury; you have to climb up onto the truck to get to some of them."

When it comes to preventing these kinds of injuries, the industry itself is driving change.

Help is available for your safety program

SafetyDriven — the Trucking Safety Council of BC is a not-for-profit association for general trucking and moving and storage companies. It develops risk management and injury prevention programs, and one of its key efforts is to help freight companies — including sole owner-operators — create a health and safety program, covering everything from inspections to safe work procedures. It's a free service that's fully customized to each group or individual, taking a down-to-earth, conversational approach to building safety knowledge.

In providing safety education, SafetyDriven meets drivers where they're at — literally. The organization has held safety "carnivals," where workers gather on site and go from station to station for five-minute, interactive briefings, the casual event wrapping up with

a barbecue. Building on that concept, and seeing as how drivers are usually out on the road, the organization piloted pop-up safety booths at rest stops, with a free lunch for drivers as a perk.

“Core to our approach is making safety approachable and accessible to the average worker,” says SafetyDriven executive director Phillip Choi. “We’re very proud of the pop-up, which is a way to engage drivers without disrupting their regular workday. The idea of going straight to the driver came from industry.”

At the COR of the matter

Trucking companies and drivers who implement and maintain a safety system can obtain a Health and Safety Certificate of Recognition (COR) — a partner program with WorkSafeBC. To date, more than 200 employers and drivers in B.C. have registered — a breakthrough and a reflection of how open industry is to promoting and teaching safety. It’s a sign, too, of how employers are collaborating in enhanced safety practices.

What’s emerging from heightened awareness of drivers’ safety is a greater openness to learning. “By bringing safety to the forefront, it changes the culture,” says COR manager Earl Galavan. “We see more drivers asking questions.”

While drivers’ safety is paramount, there could be a business case for training.

“Some feel it’s given them a competitive advantage,” says Gary Crawford, SafetyDriven occupational health and safety manager. “Having COR can attract top-quality employees and engage today’s socially conscious clients who are looking for that focus on safety.”

For more information

WorkSafeBC and SafetyDriven support other provincial initiatives aimed at promoting drivers’ safety. Shift into Winter and Cone Zone are among those that work to get practical information into the hands of those who ply the province’s highways and byways. Find out more at safetydriven.ca.

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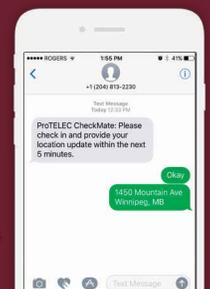
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Make your truck work for you



Behind the scenes: Larry Sargeant is featured in the Making Your Truck Work for You video series.

SafetyDriven has released three videos covering specific safety hazards and demonstrating how drivers can avoid them.

- 1 **Making your truck work for you – Dropping the trailer** looks at how injuries can be reduced by using your truck to do most of the work. Larry Sargeant, business representative of Teamsters Local 31, appears in the clip, demonstrating some simple but effective tips.

“When you’re unhooking from a trailer, if you don’t release air properly, it can shoot out at you like a bomb,” says Sargeant. “A lot of drivers have never been in a truck. In the video I demonstrate hooking up to landing gear, showing them how to let the truck do the work and how to prevent injury.”

- 2 **Making your truck work for you – Picking up the trailer** looks at how to use the truck’s air ride suspension system to eliminate or reduce the risk of an overexertion injury. When there’s significant pressure on the landing gear, drivers may find themselves using much of their body weight to rotate the handle, boosting their chances of getting hurt.

“Overexertion accounted for 25 percent of all claims for the industry from 2009 to 2018,” says Trina Pollard, manager, Industry and Labour Services, WorkSafeBC. “Landing gear is a key factor in those injuries. These injuries are avoidable, and this video demonstrates how.”

- 3 **Insider tips – Making a cone zone** covers the risk of drivers getting hurt on the side of the road by demonstrating proper cone placement.

“Truck drivers are the leading occupation for pedestrian motor vehicle incidents that involve work at the roadside,” says Brad Zall, health and safety advisor with SafetyDriven. “Roadside incidents for truck drivers often result in a fatality. When drivers are on the side of the road, it is important that they are seen. This video instructs the driver on how to control a potentially hazardous situation.” 

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