

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

August 2024

Materials handling

How do your drivers stack up?

Protect your drivers from
crash trauma

Make pretrips a habit through
documented inspections

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely



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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Use learning activities to help meet your training objectives

For all you driver trainers out there, remember that you can use learning activities to help reinforce an important message.

The main factors to consider when selecting or designing learning activities include the resources available, the nature of the topic, the composition of the group, and the time available.

Resources available

How much money is available to spend on training? Does the budget allow you to bring in outside instructors, or are you restricted to using the knowledge and experience of your in-house experts? Can you afford to purchase training aids such as videos, handbooks, or other tools for hands-on training?

Also consider the type of presentation equipment that's available, such as a DVD player, projector, computer, dry-erase board, etc.

Nature of the topic

Is the learning focused on physical skills, such as backing a vehicle or proper lifting technique, or on mental processes and attitudes, such as trip planning or customer service? If the learning is focused on physical skills, are you able to provide hands-on training? If so, where will you conduct this training session?

Select a location that will have the most impact for the lesson you present (in the cab, on the range, on the road). If the learning is focused on mental processes and attitudes, select a room with adequate space, comfortable seating, and an atmosphere that isn't noisy or disruptive.

Composition of the group and time availability

The number of students may limit how you approach activities. The larger the group, the more limited your activity choices. And, as with everything else today, time for training is limited. Make every effort to design your learning activities to fit the time allotted.

Vary your activities

Research suggests that we all have learning style preferences. Some people learn best in a lecture format, while others learn best by participating in a hands-on activity. Vary your activities within a training session so you can try to reach everybody's strengths during the session. ♦



Lucero Truszkowski

Lucero Truszkowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — MATERIALS HANDLING

The correct way to handle materials involves loading and unloading, proper stacking techniques, personal protective equipment (PPE), and exiting and entering a vehicle.

The goal is to transport cargo safely and securely without damage to the cargo or injury to the driver. Spend some time reinforcing safe, practical techniques to help keep all materials — and drivers — safe from start to finish.

TIP: Teach drivers that they aren't immune from accidents or mistakes. Remind them which common incidents can cause driver injuries or cargo damage.

Don't forget the PPE

Safety starts with appropriate PPE. All drivers should have the appropriate **foot protection**, like boots, and **hand protection**, like gloves, to get the job done. Additional PPE options include eye protection, head protection, temperature protection, and breathing protection (think dust mask).

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), all PPE should:

- Fit correctly,
- Be appropriate for the job, and
- Be in good shape.

Time to load up

The next things to worry about are the safe loading/unloading processes. Loading and unloading a trailer is a routine task, but it can still be dangerous!

When loading or unloading a vehicle, drivers should always:

- Set the parking brake,
- Turn off the vehicle,
- Pocket the vehicle's keys, and
- Chock the wheels.

When exiting the vehicle and walking around the loading dock area (including steps and ramps), drivers must be aware of the hazards that could cause a slip and/or fall, such as snow, ice, oil, or grease. Remind drivers to always use caution when working on platforms, scaffolds, or other elevated areas.

When opening the vehicle's doors, remind drivers to watch out for falling freight. Even a load that has only traveled a few miles can shift and become a hazard.



Use the 3-point rule

When entering or exiting a vehicle, drivers must always maintain three points of contact with the vehicle. Section 399.207 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) requires all trucks/tractors to have steps, handholds, and/or deck plates to make three contact points possible.

This requirement is called the **three-point rule**. Having three points of contact with the vehicle helps provide balance and reduces the chances of slipping, tripping, or falling. It also gives drivers a better chance of catching themselves should they slip, trip, or fall.

TIP: Use a training video to introduce this topic to your drivers. Choose videos that focus on the situations your drivers most often find themselves in.

How do your drivers stack up?

Improper stacking is a hazard to everyone and can even cause costly damage. To avoid the nightmare of a poorly stacked load, talk to your drivers about some of the best stack hacks to use next time they load and unload cargo.

Here are four great rules to start with:

1. Understand and follow company policies on stacking.
2. Stack lighter items on top of heavier ones.
3. Don't allow any items to stick out over the sides of the pallet.
4. Keep the pallets straight and centered. ♦

TIP: Distribute and discuss any policies your company may have on this issue. Conclude your training with a question-and-answer session.



TRAINING HANDOUT — MATERIALS HANDLING

3 is the magic number

The three-point rule is one of the most fundamental techniques used to prevent accidents. Just keep three of four limbs in contact with the vehicle at all times. This can be two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot.

For example:

1. Grasp the handles with **both hands**.
2. Keep the weight of **one foot on the ground** while climbing onto the vehicle with the **other foot**.
3. Make sure **both feet** are planted firmly on the vehicle before moving either hand.
4. Reposition **one hand at a time** as necessary.
5. Lift **one foot at a time** into the vehicle, grasping the handles firmly with **both hands** until safely seated inside the vehicle.

The contact can be broken as soon as you reach the destination (such as the ground or the cab).

This is a proven technique in preventing dangerous accidents. Try to always remember the three-point rule when entering or exiting a vehicle. ♦





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — MATERIALS HANDLING

1. If a load has only traveled a few miles, it means that it probably hasn't shifted around much and you don't need to worry about it.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. When loading or unloading a vehicle, you should:
 - A. Spend a long time in the trailer
 - B. Pass the keys to someone else
 - C. Set the parking brake
 - D. Leave the keys in the ignition

3. When exiting the truck, how many limbs should you always keep in contact with the vehicle?
 - A. 1
 - B. 2
 - C. 3
 - D. 4

4. You should hold items in your left hand and hold the handle with your right hand when exiting the vehicle.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. You can use old or damaged PPE as long as your manager approves.
 - A. True
 - B. False ♦

NAME: _____ DATE: _____



Protect your drivers from crash trauma

Motor carriers know first-hand the price tag associated with a vehicle crash. But does the company consider the emotional cost of a major accident on the mental health of the driver? There's no better time than the present to support your drivers and open the conversation to create an emotionally healthy workplace.

A driver may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) because of a serious crash. PTSD is a mental health condition that can develop after a traumatic event, like a vehicle accident. You may notice one of two responses if someone is struggling with PTSD. The driver may:

- Become overly nervous or anxious, posing a safety risk on the road; and/or
- Call it quits and leave the industry entirely.

You can't afford to lose a good driver over a bad situation. Make an effort to protect and support your drivers' mental health by taking proactive steps.

Triggering the event

PTSD happens when a traumatic event is triggered by some type of stimuli and relived through memory flashbacks. For instance, just the act of climbing into a commercial truck might recall the event for a driver who went through a serious crash.

Stimuli that can trigger the memory and painful emotions might include:

- The smell, sight, or sound of the truck;
- Traffic conditions;
- The time of day;
- A particular stretch of road;
- The time of year;
- The temperature in the cab; or
- A song on the radio.

Watch for warning signs

Watch a driver who has been involved in a crash for warning signs. These might include if the driver:

- Has trouble getting back into a routine;
- Appears troubled or withdrawn;
- Is unable to concentrate;
- Suddenly experiences heightened emotions (irritability/anger, guilt/shame); and/or
- Is easily startled/frightened.

Never attempt to diagnose a driver's physical or emotional health. Simply approach the driver in a caring, sympathetic manner.

Pose questions that don't imply a diagnosis of PTSD. Instead, express concern about the driver's change in behavior and explain what you can do to help.

Using an EAP for PTSD services

Someone who is suffering from PTSD should seek professional counseling as soon as it's evident that the accident trauma is interfering with day-to-day life.

If your organization offers an employee assistance program (EAP), ensure your staff that counselors can help. When contracting with an EAP, ask:

- Are PTSD support groups available?
- Is there someone the driver may contact outside of normal business hours when/if an anxiety attack takes place?
- Are services available for the family of the driver?

By supporting good drivers through difficult times, you can reduce the chance of them leaving and create a mental-health positive workplace for everyone. ♦

Make pretrips a habit through documented inspections

Commercial drivers may assume they need to document a pretrip vehicle inspection. That's an assumption you might want them to have, but it's not a regulation.

Before operating a commercial motor vehicle (CMV), a driver must be satisfied that the vehicle is in "good working order." The regulation (392.7) provides a short list of 11 items that must be included in that determination, such as the brakes, lights, tires, mirrors, fire extinguisher, and so on.

However, the pretrip inspection doesn't have to be documented or reported to the carrier unless the carrier has a policy requiring it.

Benefits of a documented pretrip inspection

A company's policy and procedures provide a paper trail to ensure that pretrip inspections are conducted and that drivers are acting on a vehicle defect before driving.

The documented defect and subsequent repair should be reflected in the carrier's maintenance records.

By requiring a documented inspection, either paper or electronic, motor carriers help communicate clear expectations to their drivers, technicians, and others on topics such as:

- The standards for required documentation;
- The duration of the pretrip inspection (e.g., minimum of 15 minutes);
- The components to be inspected (including items outside of the basic 11) that can lead to a breakdown; and
- The procedures needed to request maintenance when a vehicle defect is found.

If drivers consistently document their pretrip inspections, motor carriers should start to see the following benefits:

- Fewer roadside inspection violations;
- A lower Vehicle Maintenance BASIC (Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Category) score under the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program;
- Cost savings from identifying vehicle maintenance issues early; and
- A documented defense in the event of a lawsuit involving the vehicle and/or driver. ♦



Next Month's Topic: Preventive maintenance

Drivers have firsthand knowledge of how well a vehicle is running. By training your drivers well and talking to them about the importance of inspections and preventive maintenance, you can enlist their help in maintaining your fleet and avoiding costly breakdowns and repairs. ♦



Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: This is a question on how high we can stack material on a pallet for storage and/or shipping. Does OSHA determine a maximum height for stacking material on pallets?

Answer: OSHA does not have a specific regulation on the height of materials stacked on pallets.

In terms of general hazards from material storage, OSHA says that:

1910.176(b) - Secure storage. Storage of material shall not create a hazard. Bags, containers, bundles, etc., stored in tiers shall be stacked, blocked, interlocked and limited in height so that they are stable and secure against sliding or collapse.

OSHA does have a requirement in 1910.159(c) (10) regarding sprinkler clearance when stacking items: "The minimum vertical clearance between sprinklers and material below shall be 18 inches (45.7 cm)."

Also, note that depending on the material, there could be height limitations based on fire hazard concerns (for example, empty pallets can pose a hazard from fast developing fire and intense heat released from pallet stacks, therefore there are height limitations based on the type of sprinkler, indoor/outdoor, etc.) We suggest contacting your local government fire authority for guidance on this aspect. ♦

Expert Help

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