



Drivers of delivery trucks, just like operators of tractors, cranes or forklifts, are exposed to a combination of vibration and prolonged sitting. These exposures can lead to low back pain, shoulder pain, or problems with hands and wrists, causing delivery drivers to join the ranks of workers, complaining of “repetitive trauma” injuries.

Are your Drivers at Risk?

Frequent movement and repositioning is natural and healthy for our bodies, but drivers on longer trips may stay confined in the driver’s seat for hours at a time. The tension this can create on muscles increases the probability of low back pain for the driver. What are some ways to reduce these exposures:

- Reducing hours on the road is an obvious solution, but not always practical. Vibration damping seats and seat covers can help absorb the vibration. Another solution is for drivers to take more frequent breaks with plenty of movement and stretching during the breaks. Just getting away from the vibration for a few minutes periodically will help. Breaks are also a good idea for combating another serious issue facing delivery drivers — drowsy driving.
- Exposing drivers to vibration through contact with the steering wheel increases the odds of hand and wrist problems. Wearing fingerless vibration damping gloves is one way to improve hand and wrist comfort.
- Seat adjustment is an important feature of the delivery vehicle. The seat should be adjustable to match individual characteristics. Carefully set the seat-to-pedals distance, adjust the backrest angle of recline and the vertical location of the lumbar support. The inclination of the seat should be set at approximately 110 degrees or more. This can help reduce pressure on the spine and improve comfort for the driver.
- Make sure drivers adjust mirrors after setting the seat, reducing the need to bend, stretch or twist to see clearly.
- A lumbar cushion can be useful to improve comfort. These have the advantage of being portable and can be selected to the individual driver’s comfort. At first the new posture induced by the support may feel unfamiliar or awkward, but it may take some time to get use to it. Check to see how the driver feels at the end of several hours, before deciding whether to have them use it or not.
- Remind drivers to watch their pocket! For some people, keeping a wallet in the back pocket can contribute to back pain. The pressure of the wallet causes the spine to bend and pelvis to tip.

Ins and Outs

One of the most hazardous aspects of the delivery truck driver’s day is getting into and out of the vehicle!

One handed climbing or jumping to or from the vehicle — combined with twisting of the spine — create a prime opportunity for a sprain, strain or fall.

Falls from the truck are one of the most frequent worker injuries in wholesale distribution. The vast majority occur because the driver is preoccupied with something else.

- Drivers should be alerted to use caution when getting in and out of the truck. Use two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand (3 point mount) as a basic procedure for climbing on and off. Three points of the body should be in contact with the vehicle.
- Don’t step into the unknown! Remind drivers to look at the ground before exiting the truck to see where they will be stepping. Take extra caution in rough terrains, oily conditions, or cluttered areas.
- Appropriate footwear will help to grip footholds, and to prevent slips when exiting the vehicle onto icy or wet ground. Cowboy boots may look cool, but the leather soles provide poor traction on slippery surfaces.

Too Hot? Too Cold?

Environmental conditions such as excessive summer heat or extreme winter cold can affect a driver's risk of injury. Ideally, delivery vehicles will be equipped with functioning temperature control — both heaters and air conditioning.

Temperatures inside the truck below 70 degrees (F) increase the risk of hand/wrist trouble, by causing blood to flow away from the hands and feet as the body attempts to maintain a constant temperature.

Summer heat combined with high humidity (100 degrees F and humidity higher than 40%) can lead to driver problems as well. An often ignored advantage to a functioning air conditioner is that windows can be closed which can help prevent accidents caused by bees or wasps flying into the cab during summer months.

Buying a New Delivery Vehicle?

If so, now is the time to consider the safety features of your purchase — whether you are buying or leasing, new or used. Check for options that could help to reduce the risk of pain, injury, and workers' compensation claims for delivery drivers. Features to watch for include:

- Fully adjustable seats.
- Adequate and adjustable lumbar support in the seat.
- Slip resistant steps and platforms.
- Hand rails for mounting and dismounting.
- Power steering – reduces pressure on the back, hands and wrists — especially at slower speeds or maneuvering at near stopped speeds (both common in delivery driving).
- Environmental features – heating, air conditioning, etc.

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