



Labour – Ergo-Tips 2009-01

Aches and Pains – Long Haul Truck Driving

Are you a long haul truck driver who wants to prevent or reduce aches and pains in your lower back, legs, arms, neck and shoulders? Then this Ergo-Tip information sheet is for you.

Long haul truck driving is demanding on the body and can result in increased fatigue not only mentally, but physically. The purpose of the Ergo-Tips is to help you perform your job more efficiently by reducing or eliminating injury and pain.

Ergonomic related issue	Consider the following
<p>Prolonged sitting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When sitting your pelvis rotates and flattens the natural curve in your lower back resulting in increased pressure on your spine. The longer you drive the more fatigued and weaker your muscles get as they try to maintain a sitting position while operating the truck. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within reason, shift positions and this will give a much needed rest for some of the muscles being used. Keep your back pant pockets free of thick items such as wallets as they will change the tilt of your pelvis and put more strain on the musculoskeletal system. Adjust the seat and steering wheel so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your feet can reach the pedals without lifting your back off the seat. The back of the seat reclines slightly back from upright. The natural curve in your lower back is supported. Reduce the pressure on your spine by using the lumbar support in the driver’s seat or secure something for external support such as a rolled up towel tied to the seat. About every 30 minutes, make slight adjustments to the seat. Take a break to get out of the truck to stand, stretch, and walk to help circulate the blood in your legs and give a much needed rest to the muscles needed to sit. It only takes 5 minutes every hour.
<p>Vibration when driving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vibration is not always felt and it causes your muscles to frequently contract and relax increasing the level of fatigue. The spinal discs are more susceptible to injury when exposed to prolonged vibration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the amount of vibration by properly maintaining your truck and by reducing the transfer of vibration from the truck to the seat. Ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shocks and springs are in good condition. Tires are in good condition and properly inflated. Seat is in good condition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seat suspension works properly. Padding in seat is not too worn or compressed. Seat adjustment controls work properly. Vibration at levels experienced during truck driving can contribute to mental fatigue and induce sleep during prolonged exposure. Take a break if you are feeling overly fatigued and sleepy. Within reason, reduce your driving speed to reduce vibration.

Lifting immediately after prolonged driving:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediately after a long drive many of your muscles are fatigued, tendons/ligaments are stretched, and your spinal discs are more vulnerable to injury. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid any physically demanding task such as lifting immediately after a long drive. Before performing a task such as unloading a trailer, take a couple of minutes to stand, stretch and walk. This will allow for some recovery time for the musculoskeletal system. |
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Pay attention to signs and symptoms:

- Pay attention to signs and symptoms as they can be a warning of a potential injury. Make adjustments to compensate for the signs and symptoms you feel. If needed pull over and take a rest break. Common signs and symptoms may include:
 - Ache or soreness in your back: commonly caused by highly fatigued muscles.
 - Cramping or aching in your legs: can be caused by poor circulation or pooling of blood in legs from sustained positions.
 - Overall feeling of fatigue (mental and physical): overworked muscles will contribute to the feeling of fatigue.

Employers under Federal Jurisdiction have an obligation to assess the hazards in the work place. Contact a HRSDC – Labour Program District Office at 1-800-641-4049 if you have any questions on the *Canada Labour Code* Part II ergonomic requirements or to request a copy of the Labour Program’s ergonomic publications.

Visit the HRSDC – Labour Program internet website (labour.gc.ca) for access to health and safety publications and the new Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI) E-tool.