



Fatigue-busting strategies for transport drivers

Transport drivers, such as truck drivers, face unique challenges related to long hours on the road, irregular schedules, and sedentary work conditions. Implementing effective fatigue countermeasures is crucial to mitigate fatigue, promote safety, and improve overall wellbeing. **Here are some examples tailored specifically for transport drivers:**

Regular breaks

Regular breaks: take regular breaks during long hauls to rest, stretch, and refresh. Breaks should be scheduled strategically to coincide with periods of low alertness or fatigue.

Healthy sleep habits

Establishing healthy sleep habits, such as maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, creating a comfortable sleep environment in your truck cab, or your home and avoiding stimulants like caffeine before bedtime.

Napping

Promote the use of strategic napping as a fatigue countermeasure during rest breaks or scheduled downtime. Short naps (20-30 mins) can help drivers combat sleepiness and improve alertness without disrupting their overall sleep schedule.

Physical activity

Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine to combat the sedentary nature of your job. Stretching exercises, brief walks during rest breaks, and other forms of light exercise can help reduce stiffness, improve circulation, and boost alertness.

Hydration

Ensure you have access to clean drinking water to stay hydrated throughout your shifts. Dehydration can exacerbate fatigue and impair cognitive function, so it's essential for drivers to drink plenty of fluids, especially in hot or humid conditions.

Healthy eating options

Choose balanced meals and snacks that support sustained energy levels and overall wellbeing.

- Foods rich in complex carbohydrates provide a steady source of energy and help prevent blood sugar spikes and crashes.
- Protein is essential for maintaining energy levels and promoting muscle health. Protein-rich snacks like nuts, seeds, and hard-boiled eggs can also help stave off hunger and keep you energized.
- Incorporating healthy fats into your diet can provide a concentrated source of energy and help keep you feeling satisfied between meals. Include sources of healthy fats such as avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and fatty fish like salmon and tuna.
- Staying hydrated is essential for maintaining energy levels and cognitive function.

Stress management

Mindfulness exercises, deep breathing techniques, and access to mental health support services.

Education and training

Ongoing education and training on fatigue management, defensive driving techniques, and other relevant topics to empower drivers to make informed decisions and prioritise safety.

By implementing these countermeasures, employers can help transport drivers mitigate the risks associated with fatigue, promote safer driving practices, and support their overall health and wellbeing on the job. Additionally, fostering a culture of open communication, support, and collaboration among drivers and management can further enhance the effectiveness of fatigue management efforts.



Sleep hygiene for transport drivers

For transport drivers, maintaining good sleep hygiene is essential for promoting restful and recuperative sleep, which is crucial for their safety, wellbeing, and job performance.

Here are some sleep hygiene tips specifically tailored for transport drivers:

Invest in a quality mattress and bedding

Since drivers spend a significant amount of time in their trucks, investing in a comfortable mattress and high-quality bedding can make a big difference in sleep quality. Choose bedding materials that are breathable, moisture-wicking, and conducive to temperature regulation.

Limit caffeine and stimulants

While caffeine can help drivers stay alert during long hauls, it's essential to consume it in moderation and avoid it close to bedtime. Limit caffeine intake several hours before your intended bedtime to prevent interference with sleep.

Practice relaxation techniques

Engage in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or visualisation exercises to help calm the mind and prepare for sleep. Consider using relaxation apps or guided meditation recordings to assist with relaxation.

Limit screen time before bed

Exposure to screens before bedtime, such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops, can disrupt sleep patterns due to the blue light emitted by these devices. Try to avoid screens at least an hour before bedtime, or use blue light-blocking glasses or screen filters to minimise the impact.

Stay hydrated

Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated, but be mindful of fluid intake close to bedtime to avoid frequent trips to the bathroom during the night.

Avoid heavy meals and large snacks before bed

Eating heavy or large meals before bedtime can cause discomfort and disrupt sleep. Opt for lighter, easily digestible snacks if you're hungry before bedtime.

Take strategic naps

If you're feeling fatigued during breaks or rest periods, consider taking a short nap (20-30 mins) to help recharge and improve alertness. Be mindful not to nap for too long or too close to bedtime, as this can interfere with your ability to fall asleep at night.

Communicate your sleep needs

Communicate your sleep needs with your employer, dispatcher, or co-workers to ensure they understand the importance of prioritising sleep and allowing you adequate rest between shifts.

By incorporating these sleep hygiene tips into their routine, transport drivers can optimise their sleep quality, promote alertness and safety on the road, and support their overall health and well-being. Additionally, seeking professional help if experiencing persistent sleep problems or fatigue is essential for addressing any underlying issues and improving sleep quality.