

Beyond The Cab

The only safety management newsletter dedicated exclusively to addressing injury prevention and workers' compensation cost control for trucking companies.



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More than Pre-Trips

Among the activities that can be taken to protect employees from getting injured at work, conducting routine, deliberate, organized inspections is one of the best... at least if the individual (or group) conducting the inspections recognize that conducting inspections is only the beginning of the process. Winston Churchill once said, *"To look is one thing. To see what you look at is another. To understand what you see is another. To learn from what you understand is something else. But to act on what you learn is all that really matters."*

The trucking industry is quite familiar with the process and value of conducting structured inspections. After all, drivers are required to conduct and document pre-trip and post-trip inspections, employers are required to have trucks inspected and certified annually, and state-operated inspection stations are seemingly always lined with trucks waiting to be inspected. Drivers of flatbed equipment are required to inspect their load securement devices at specific intervals during transit and drivers hauling hazardous materials have their own set of inspection requirements specific to the freight they are hauling. If there's any industry that can say they are familiar with inspections, it's the transportation industry.

On behalf of myself, my family and the millions of drivers who share the road with commercial trucks daily, I want to extend my gratitude. The incidence of commercial motor vehicle accidents that result from defective or improperly maintained equipment is, without question, immeasurably lower than it would be without the effort of your industry to conduct inspections.

Although the goal of the inspections mentioned above is being reached as a result of your efforts (and the efforts of your employees),

it is important to understand that the goal of those inspections is the protection of the general driving public, not necessarily the protection of your employees.

To see a measurable impact on the prevention of employee injuries, safety directors within the trucking industry are encouraged to develop inspections that seek to identify hazards that are not contemplated by the FMCSR inspection requirements. Within the trucking industry, there are three general areas that typically escape such inspections. These are (1) the facility, (2) the equipment, and (3) the employees.

The Facility

Trucking companies (along with a host of companies in other service-related industries) are at a disadvantage with respect to conducting facility inspections because the facilities at which employees may be exposed to injury-producing hazards (shippers, receivers, truck stops, etc.) are not within your control. However, even within the smallest of trucking companies, there is typically a company office from which employees are dispatched; a lot at which trucks and trailers are parked; a garage where service and repair functions are performed; and/or a dock where freight is staged.

Each of these has the potential for physical hazards that increase the likelihood of an employee injury. Within the garage there might be inadequate ventilation, improperly stored flammable liquids or a handheld grinder with the guard removed. Within the office there might be trip hazards or a poorly-configured computer workstation that requires frequent twisting or reaching. Within the dock area there might be damaged dock plates or inadequately lubricated dock doors. And even on the truck/trailer lot, there might be holes that could cause an ankle injury or trailers parked so close together that it requires a contortionist to crank the landing gear.

The Equipment

Although it is the equipment (truck and trailer) that is the focus of much of FMCSR required inspections, not everything that can be hazardous to your driver is addressed by these inspections. Consider for example how the driver interacts with the equipment while he is outside of the cab. He may pull the fifth-wheel release, slide the tandems, open the trailer doors, position load-locks, climb onto the catwalk and/or trailer, etc. For that reason, these equipment components should be assessed through an intentional inspection process. How much force is required to pull the fifth-wheel release? Are there trip hazards such as rubber straps on the steps of the truck? Do trailer doors open/close freely? Is the landing gear adequately lubricated? And so on.

The Employees

Lastly, in conducting inspections, don't overlook the benefit of intentionally observing employees for at-risk behaviors. Whether it is observing drivers to see if they exit the cab facing their truck; observing mechanics to ensure that they wear their safety glasses when it's warranted; or observing forklift operators to ensure that they use wheel chocks on the trailer they are unloading, seeking to identify at-risk behaviors is as much an essential component of the routine, deliberate, and organized inspection process as any other.



Check it out now at...www.midwesterninsurance.com/certified.htm

Click on [Helpful Resources](#) for a sample inspection form designed for the trucking industry that you can modify to address the unique nature of your operation.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!



The following companies now have a **Certified Loss Control Program**

Harrell Transportation (Memphis, TN)
Hopkinsville Elevator (Hopkinsville, KY)