

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



CAN YOU SPEAK FRENCH – PARLAIS VOUS FRANCAIS?

Speaking French is not really a requirement to read and understand this Real Life Lesson or to be a commercial vehicle driver in the U.S., but it did get your attention. This topic does have some reference to the French language however you don't need to be fluent in French to benefit from this story.

In the French language there are two different words that describe the concept of "new." One is nouvelle and the other is nouveau. Forget that, but do remember this. One describes an object that is new to the world (just invented, designed, built, etc.) and the other describes an object that is new to you (house, spouse, vehicle, etc.). All of us have experienced the "new to us" concept and only some of us have experienced the "new to the world" concept. A good example is hand-me-down clothes compared to brand new store bought clothes, or new cars versus used cars.

So what does this have to do with truck drivers getting hurt? The answer is it has more to do with truck drivers than you think. James' experience is a classic example. He works for a company that upgrades one third of its fleet every year. This was his lucky year. His 2010 truck was replaced with a 2012 truck and he was excited, as anyone would be. There ain't nothing like a new ride. But, this was also his unlucky year.

When James was transferring his stuff from the old truck to the new truck he slipped on the step plate, fell and suffered a back injury. It was a few weeks before he could drive his new truck.

REAL LIFE LESSON

The lesson to be learned from this injury is simple, but it gets sidetracked when a person is moving from old to new. For most of us the motivation is to transition to the new, and it doesn't matter if the object is new to the world or new to us. The point is that it represents change and until that change is incorporated into routine operations/procedures it still presents the opportunity for injury. Such was the case with James. The new truck did not have slip resistant tape on the step plates, and that is what he was used to. When he stepped on that plate his foot slipped, he dropped all of his stuff, and fell backwards injuring his back.

By the way, James can't speak a word of French but he knows the difference between nouvelle and nouveau. All he has to do is remember the day when he fell off the steps on his "new" truck. And, during his temporary restricted time he researched the internet and found out that his name in French is Jacque; the word for injury in French is blessure; and the word for prevention in French is just about the same as it is in English except it has a funny little line over the e.