

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



IF IT HURTS – SAY SO

One of the most common injuries sustained by truck drivers is strained backs and shoulders. There's a long list of how these injuries occur, such as straining your back when you slip while entering or exiting your truck, or straining your shoulder while pulling a fifth wheel and adjusting tandems, or straining your back while opening/closing trailer doors, or straining your back while positioning freight, etc. There's more, but you get the point. The opportunity to injure one's back and shoulders is a risk faced by truck drivers on a daily basis and the injuries can be very painful, long-term, expensive and even disabling. Two examples of real injuries are described to make the point.

Rudy took pride in the fact that he had been working (construction for ten years and now driving for five) and had never missed a day because of sickness or injury. He is the type of person who can be described as having a very strong work ethic. However, Rudy felt a "pain" in his right shoulder last summer when he was pulling on the pin while trying to adjust the tandems on his trailer. The trailer was old and pulling on the pin turned out to be a physical challenge. He did not pay much attention to the pain because it only hurt when he raised his arm and he thought it would just go away. It didn't. It got much worse two weeks later when he was again pulling on a tandem pin. Rudy finally notified dispatch of his injury, which was medically diagnosed as a torn rotator cuff. Several medical appointments, a surgery, multiple visits to physical therapy and the inability to return to work ruined Rudy's 15+ years of never missing a day of work because of sickness or injury. He became very discouraged.

Sheila's story was somewhat the same as Rudy's. She strained her back when she slipped while entering the cab of her truck. It felt "funny" for a little while but she got used to the feeling and decided to just continue with the rest of her 10 day dispatch. Over the next several days she learned how to sit differently to get comfortable and to slow down and not try to walk as fast. Long story short, when she finally made it home she could hardly stand up straight and the pain was severe. Medical evaluation determined that she had a multiple spasm and herniated disk. Sheila did not drive again for several months.

REAL LIFE LESSON

Strains and sprains are injuries, just like broken bones and cuts. The pain from them is a signal that something is wrong with your body and it needs attention. The treatment can range from simply taking a break for a few minutes to seeking medical assistance. However, the best outcome for medical treatment results when it occurs soon after the injury, prior to further damage. This means that the injury needs to be reported to the designated person back at the company so proper medical intervention can be coordinated. In other words, if it hurts – say so.