



Ergonomics Tips for Fleet Safety



Fleet drivers are exposed to various risk factors such as vibration, prolonged sitting in a limited space and awkward postures. This can increase the risk of musculoskeletal injury, cause pain and discomfort from lack of circulation, and also affect a driver's operational efficiency and productivity. Below are some areas employers can focus on to enhance fleet driver safety and productivity.

Design and access

- Install vibration-damping or air-ride seats to help absorb the vibration frequency.
- Purchase or retrofit vehicles with a suspension system that helps minimize vibrations.
- Consider design options for vehicle cabinets and shelving to help drivers organize their tools within ergonomic reach.
- When planning a vehicle upfit or new vehicle purchase, consider installing ergonomically friendly equipment such as liftgates, slide-out gates, side-door access, handles for access, and hydraulic equipment holding racks for ladders, heavy tools and other equipment.

Regularly promote ergonomics practices

The ergonomics practices listed below should be incorporated into fleet safety programs and regularly communicated by the company to fleet drivers.

- Drivers on long trips may stay confined in the driver's seat for hours at a time, not allowing for the repositioning and movement their bodies naturally need. Additionally, continuous exposure to vibrations can lead to lower back pain and weakness in the arms, shoulders and neck. The most practical solution is to take frequent breaks, which will also help combat drowsy driving and reduce exposure to vibrations.
- Adjust the seat. Carefully set the seat-to-pedal distance, adjust the backrest angle of recline, and if your seat has built-in adjustable lumbar support, adjust the vertical location to be snug against your lower back. The inclination of the seat should be set at approximately 110 degrees or more to reduce pressure on the spine.

- Adjust mirrors after setting the seat so you won't have to bend, stretch or twist to see clearly.
- When gripping the steering wheel, use a relaxed grip and place your hands such that your elbows are close to your sides without reaching for the wheel with extended arms.
- Location of your hands on the steering wheel can also help reduce shoulder strain (a "nine and three" position is recommended).
- Drivers should avoid jumping out of the cab, as this can create impact stress on the lower back. Use two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand (three points of contact) as a basic procedure for climbing on and off. Always use grab bars if present and avoid grabbing onto the steering wheel or door, as both can move and throw you off balance.
- Appropriate footwear will help to grip footholds and prevent slips when exiting the vehicle onto the icy or wet ground. Check your shoe for an American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) label. If SR is listed, it means that the shoes have been tested for slip resistance.

Regular maintenance and service

- Maintain proper tire inflation, as overinflated tires can create stiffness and rigidity that result in increased vibrations. Underinflated tires can overheat and wear down abnormally, resulting in vibrations at low or high speeds.
- Ensure that A/C systems are inspected and maintained to avoid leaks and component failures.
- When upfitting or purchasing new fleet vehicles, consider features that offer faster and easier access to common maintenance parts.

To learn more about managing risk and increasing efficiency, visit cna.com/riskcontrol.