

FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS  
AND CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION, INC.

# NITACA NEWS

Summer 2020



The old saying, "Trucking moves America forward" has become more and more evident over the past months as over-the-road truck drivers and local couriers risk their own health to keep America stocked during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an effort to stay healthy, drivers have stated that they are taking extra precautions. Many are more aware of the places they go and everything they touch. More precautions are taken such as face masks, gloves, and extra care to sanitize their cabs. One of the biggest hurdles faced by over-the-road drivers is finding a place to eat and take a shower.

As most drivers are putting in longer hours and spending more time away from their families, the American people are trying to show their support and gratitude for these unsung heroes. Social media users are using the hashtag #ThankATrucker to post messages, while billboards line America's highways with messages of thanks.

The *Providing for the Frontline initiative*, sponsored by the American Trucking Associations, along with OneBeacon, U.S. Bank, Michelin and Hydro-Chem Systems, is holding a photo contest for drivers to submit a fun photo of themselves and their rig. Once submitted, they will automatically be entered into a

drawing to win a \$25 electronic gift card for a meal of their choice while on the road. Multiple winners will be selected daily. Photos can be submitted at <https://www.trucking.org/thankatrucker>.

Earlier this month, the ATA also teamed up with Protective Insurance and ABF Freight to supply 550 gallons of hand sanitizer to eight states across the country. To date, thousands of drivers have been able to refill their personal supply at no cost to them. Visit <https://trucking.org/news-insights> for a list of participating locations.

"OneBeacon Insurance is proud of truckers and their unwavering determination to continue to deliver much needed goods and services during COVID-19," said Lori A. Cerna, president of OneBeacon's Accident & Health group. "In their honor, we are excited to be able to sponsor a program that provides drivers with hand sanitizer and gift cards for meals during this difficult time."

The National Independent Truckers Association of America would also like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt gratitude to these front-line workers. We appreciate the sacrifices you make every day, especially during these trying times and hope you, and your families, are safe and well.



# Health Risks for Truck Drivers

(The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) - Long-haul truck drivers may develop health problems because of their work environment. If they get a medical condition that affects their ability to drive, it could cost them their commercial driving license.

The survey found long-haul truck drivers are more likely to smoke, be overweight, and are less likely to be physically active compared to other US workers.

Learn more about these results below and some resources to help address these problems.

## Obesity

Truck drivers were twice as likely to be obese compared to other US workers. Being obese, or overweight, can increase the risk of other health problems, such as:

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- High cholesterol
- Sleep apnea
- Lack of physical activity

## Smoking

The survey found truck drivers were twice as likely to smoke compared to other US workers. We also found smoking was three times higher among the female drivers compared to other women in the US workforce. Smoking may be higher among truckers because it may help combat fatigue.

Smoking increases your risk of:

- Cancer, including the lungs, bladder, blood, cervix, colon/rectal, kidneys, esophagus, liver, larynx, stomach, and pancreas
- Coronary heart disease
- Emphysema
- Stroke

If drivers smoke to stay awake, outlined are alternative measures to combat fatigue:

- Get more than seven hours of sleep a night
- Drink more water
- Increase physical activity
- Increase omega-3 fatty acids, which can boost your alertness when taken regularly
- Loose extra weight by cutting down on portion sizes and trying to eat a well-balanced diet.
- Eat smaller meals more often during the day to help steady your blood sugar level.

## Low Physical Activity

Among those surveyed, three out of four truck drivers said they did not get the recommended amount of physical activity. The survey found only 1 out of 4 men and 1 out of 5 women drivers said they exercised for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Getting at least 2 ½ hours of vigorous physical activity a week has been found to improve sleep, reduce stress, enhance alertness, and reduce the chance of car crashes.

## High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is when your blood pressure rises and stays high for a long time, which can lead to heart damage and other health problems. It can also raise the risk for heart disease and stroke, two leading causes of death in the United States.

The survey found 26% of truck drivers said they have hypertension, compared to 24% of the US working population.

## Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that occurs when your blood glucose, also called blood sugar, is too high. Blood glucose is the main source of energy and comes from the food that is eaten. Insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas, helps glucose from food get into cells to be used for energy. Sometimes the body doesn't make enough—or any—insulin or doesn't use insulin well. Glucose then stays in the blood and doesn't reach cells.

Over time, having too much glucose in one's blood can cause health problems, such as:

- heart disease
- blindness
- kidney failure
- low-extremity amputations

The survey found 14% of truck drivers said they have diabetes compared to 7% of the US working population.



## MICHELIN® ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A BIG FLEET TO GET ON THE ROAD TO SAVINGS**

The MICHELIN® Advantage Program is a free program for Small Fleets and Owner-Operators, which allows you to have a direct relationship with Michelin to make you more competitive on the road. Members can enjoy consistent, nationwide pricing on new MICHELIN® truck tires and MICHELIN® Retread Technologies retreads.

Log-in at [www.nitaca.org](http://www.nitaca.org) for complete program and registration details.



# Driving When You Have Sleep Apnea

## Overview

(Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) - A study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania and sponsored by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the American Transportation Research Institute of the American Trucking Associations found that almost one-third (28 percent) of commercial truck drivers have mild to severe sleep apnea.

## What is Sleep Apnea?

Sleep apnea is a breathing-related sleep disorder that causes brief interruptions of breathing during sleep. These pauses in breathing can last at least 10 seconds or more and can occur up to 400 times a night. Sleep apnea is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition that often goes unrecognized and undiagnosed.

## Risk Factors for Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea occurs in all age groups and both sexes, but there are a number of factors that may put some at higher risk:

- A family history of sleep apnea
- Having a small upper airway
- Being overweight
- Having a recessed chin, small jaw, or a large overbite
- A large neck size (17 inches or greater for men, 16 inches or greater for women)
- Smoking and alcohol use
- Being age 40 or older
- Ethnicity

## Symptoms of Sleep Apnea

- Loud snoring
- Morning headaches and nausea
- Gasping or choking while sleeping
- Loss of sex drive/impotence
- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Irritability and/or feelings of depression
- Disturbed sleep
- Concentration and memory problems
- Frequent nighttime urination

## Diagnosing Sleep Apnea

In order to diagnose sleep apnea, a doctor may require the patient to spend the night at a sleep center, where the patient can be monitored.

## How Can Sleep Apnea Affect Driving?

Sleep apnea affects sleep, and may also affect daytime alertness and performance. Untreated sleep apnea can make it difficult to stay awake, focus and react quickly while driving. In general, studies show that people with untreated sleep apnea have an increased risk of being involved in a fatigue-related motor vehicle crash.

Many sleep apnea patients say they never fall asleep while driving. That may be true. But remember, one doesn't need to fall asleep to have a crash. A less alert driver — with untreated sleep apnea; is not as aware as they should be.

## Can A Driver With Sleep Apnea Still Drive?

Yes! While FMCSA regulations do not specifically address sleep apnea, they do prescribe that a person with a medical history or clinical diagnosis of any condition likely to interfere with their ability to drive safely cannot be medically qualified to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate commerce.

However, once successfully treated, a driver may regain their "medically-qualified-to-drive" status. It is important to note that most cases of sleep apnea can be treated successfully.

Each State sets its own medical standards for driving a CMV in intrastate commerce. Check with your local Department of Motor Vehicles for regulations in each State.

## What Should Be Done if Diagnosed With Sleep Apnea?

Contact the medical qualifying examiner to determine fitness to operate a commercial motor vehicle and to get help with treatment.

## What Level of Sleep Apnea (mild, moderate, severe) Disqualifies a CMV Driver?

The disqualifying level of sleep apnea is moderate to severe, which interferes with safe driving. The medical examiner must qualify and determine a driver's medical fitness for duty.

## What are the Obligations of a Motor Carrier Regarding Employees with Sleep Apnea?

A motor carrier may not require or permit a driver to operate a CMV if the driver has a condition — including sleep apnea — that would affect his or her ability to safely operate the vehicle.

It is critical that persons with sleep apnea fully use the treatment provided by their doctor. They should not drive if they are not being treated. Being effectively treated, and complying with that treatment, offers the best hope of a commercial driver with sleep apnea to secure the ability to do his or her job safely and be fully alert.

The NITACA NEWS Newsletter is published by:  
**NATIONAL INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS  
AND CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION, INC.**

For information regarding your membership  
and association services, call or write:

**Membership Services Office  
National Independent Truckers  
and Contractors Association, Inc.  
16476 Wild Horse Creek Road  
Chesterfield, MO 63017**

**1-844-NITACA-1 (844-648-2221)**

Articles in this newsletter are meant to be informative, enlightening, and helpful to you. While all information contained herein is meant to be completely factual, it is always subject to change. Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment nor should they be misconstrued as the opinion of NITACA.

Consult your doctor before starting any exercise and dietary program.

