

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

NITACA News

Winter 2021



- Stay Healthy as a Long Haul Truck Driver During COVID-19
- Strategies to Prepare for Safe Winter Driving

Stay Healthy as a Long-Haul Truck Driver During COVID-19

As a long-haul truck driver your job is essential and has kept you on the road since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Months have gone by, but the virus is still out there and being out in public traveling puts you at a higher-exposure risk than people who can work from home. This is especially true with the added risk associated by traveling across state lines into denser populations reporting high levels of daily COVID-19 cases.

Admittedly there is an unavoidable risk that comes along with the very nature of the job as a truck driver. During this time of uncertainty, where higher risk activities raise potential, there are things you can do to protect yourself and stay healthier during the pandemic.

Research Travel Stops - While the safest precaution is to assume everyone is potentially infected, it still helps to research the areas you will stop in. This will let you know requirement changes to minimize risk that may differ not only by state, but by the different counties in those states. It can offer beneficial information like the infection rate, so you are knowledgeable about whether or not you are headed into a "hot spot" that is considered a higher-exposure level than the average.

Other important information for you to know is what businesses are open in the areas you are traveling. If there is something you need from a business that is closed, or has restricted hours, this could affect your ability to have access to certain amenities.

The main companies that you frequent, such as rest stops and hotels, should be included in this research. This will educate you on the measures they are taking to ensure the health and safety of their patrons and will provide you with peace of mind that they are taking the proper steps to

protect the public.

Minimize Exposure - Exposure can be minimized by packing more food to travel with you versus getting out of the truck. You can also order take out or have food delivered straight to you in order to limit the number of people and high contact areas you encounter in a day.

If you do have to go out, take necessary precautions. This includes maintaining a distance from others of at least six feet apart, wearing a face mask that covers your nose, mouth and chin, using sanitizing wipes to wipe down high touch surfaces like gas pumps and door handles, washing your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, when available, and if not using a hand sanitizer with an alcohol content of at least 60 percent. Remembering not to touch your face will also decrease risk since the eyes, nose and mouth are entry points for the virus.

Some of these precautions you may already know, but it is always a good reminder when on the road. It can be easy to get complacent and forget that these extra measures are still needed in order to protect your health and safety while out in public exposing yourself to differing threat levels of the virus.

Have a Plan - Be prepared with a plan just in case you get sick to help minimize downtime all while keeping delivery operations moving. This is a plan that you should discuss with your employer. They should, along with your help, have a system in place to address the potential of you becoming ill while traveling.

Important things to know while traveling are where the nearest urgent care center is in case you need medical treatment. You should know



who will take over your route should you be unable to keep working. Also consider how your family will handle the situation if you become sick.

The situation becomes less scary when everyone involved knows what to expect and how to meet the expectations that may be required of them. While taking precaution does minimize your risk it doesn't eliminate it. If you test positive for COVID-19 while working, having a quarantine plan that reduces exposure to your family while they care for you will enable you to protect your family while you get better.

Adopt Healthy Habits–

If you do not have healthy habits already, now is the opportune time to start. Frequently cleaning high touch areas inside the truck cab with CDC-approved cleaners that kill the virus will help ensure you have sanitized areas that may have been exposed to COVID-19. Staying organized will help as well. Knowing where key items are that you use often will reduce touching extra surfaces to find things.

Healthy habits go beyond cleaning and organizing. Taking care of your body is a key factor of your overall health and your body's ability to fight infection. Helpful ways that keep your immune system functioning efficiently are by eating a well-balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and maintaining a regular workout schedule.

Keeping your surrounding area clean and maintaining the overall health of your body through good habits decrease your chance of illness and increase your body's ability to fight off germs.

Keep Stocked Up on Essentials -

Keeping important items stocked while on the road ensures you are prepared for anything that may come up. Making sure your first aid kit has everything you need, including average everyday items like antacids and band aids reduces the need to make a stop while driving.

Make a checklist of items you want to ensure you have with you at all times. This will serve as an inventory list you can compare against and use as a guide to replenish supplies before your next travel assignment. Being able to take care of your everyday needs while reducing exposure to the public helps reduce your chances of contracting COVID-19.

Even though you can't eliminate the risk of COVID-19, using these tips can help minimize your exposure while on the job. Educating yourself about what is required for certain regions of the country and having a plan in place helps not only keep yourself safe, but others around you safe as well.



Strategies to Prepare for Safe Winter Driving

From slick, icy roads to holiday drivers, the winter months bring a slew of unique challenges for truck drivers. With winter just around the corner, we have prepared a list of tips and tricks to stay safe on the roads, keep your truck in top-notch condition and prepare for the unpredictable months ahead.

Below are top reminders and recommendations for safe driving this winter:

1. Get a Tune Up

First things first. While routine tune ups are always important to keep your truck in excellent running condition, maintenance during the winter months is critical. Be sure to check the tire pressure and tread, top off fluids, change the oil and check that wiper blades, lights and defrosters are all in working order more often than usual. Inspect your truck closely before each drive and consider taking it to a mechanic for maintenance before any particularly long hauls.

2. Prepare for the Unexpected

Though it can be hard to predict just what may happen when you set out on the road, planning ahead can help ensure you are better prepared to navigate the unexpected. First, create a checklist of materials or supplies you would need if you were to lose traction, get stranded or have a collision. Use your checklist to pack supplies for your journey, including warm clothes, a blanket, flashlight, first aid kit, ice scraper, sandbags, jumper cables, bottled water and extra food.

3. Tread Lightly

Slow and steady are key when driving during the winter months. Tires are more likely to lose traction when driving on slick, icy or snow-covered roads, increasing the risk of jackknifing or collision. To avoid these scenarios, it is important to respond to the road and weather conditions. Stay aware of your

surroundings and adjust your speed as necessary. Avoid sharp turns and slow down when driving over bridges, which are more likely to be covered in ice and will often freeze before roads do. Intersections may also freeze more quickly than roads. Be careful to accelerate and decelerate slowly, as slamming on the gas or brakes can also cause you to lose traction.

4. Allow More Space

Put more distance between you and other drivers. The wet road conditions and decreased visibility make it even more important to maintain a safe following distance. Increasing your following distance—and driving more slowly—will give you more time to react to other drivers' actions in unpredictable situations. It is recommended to at least double your following distance in wet conditions.

5. Watch for Black Ice

Black ice is one of the most dangerous hazards truck drivers can encounter on the road. It's a thin layer of ice that is virtually transparent, making it even harder to see from a distance. The most common places you may encounter black ice are on bridges, overpasses, tunnels and shaded or covered areas. If you hit a patch of black ice, try to slow down before reaching it but don't brake while driving directly over it. Braking can cause you to skid and lose control. You can try salting or sanding the ice to neutralize it. It's important to note that salting will work only in temperatures above 15 degrees F.

6. Shine Bright

Weather conditions and early sunsets increase the need for visibility. Ensure that all your lights—headlights, taillights, cab and brake lights—are clean and in working order before you hit the road. Once on the road, signal whenever turning or changing lanes so that other drivers can make space for you. Not only will bright lights help you see more clearly

but they will help other drivers see you and be aware of your direction.

7. See Clearly

Your windshield can also affect your visibility in cold or wet weather. Use your defroster to clear a foggy windshield. The dry air from running your AC will help defog the glass and keep it clear for you. Also check that the blades on your windshield wiper are not cracked or dry, which can affect them working properly in rain or snow. Making sure your sight line is always clear will help you navigate otherwise obscured or difficult situations caused by inclement weather.

8. Stay Warm

When temperatures drop, diesel can freeze if it hasn't been treated with certain fuel additives to keep it from solidifying, or gelling. When diesel freezes, it turns into a stiff, waxy substance that can clog the filter and stop the flow of fuel to the engine. Frozen or gelled diesel can cause your truck to lag when you try to accelerate, the fuel pressure to be low, the truck to die quickly after starting or it simply won't start at

all. To keep your diesel from freezing, try to keep your tank full and your truck warm by parking indoors when possible and heating up the cab while idling. There are also additives you can add to the fuel tank to decrease the likelihood of freezing.

9. Use Your Best Judgement

Like the old adage says, it's better to be safe than sorry. If weather conditions are making it difficult or unsafe for you to stay on the road, go ahead and make the call to exit the freeway. But don't pull off on the shoulder, especially in low visibility situations, as other cars may not see you at all or, if they do, may think you're in a lane. Always exit the freeway and look for a parking lot or other safe place where you can park and wait out the weather. In those instances, you can use your professional judgement to make the call. Don't feel rushed or pressured to meet a deadline or delivery date. Your safety is the priority.

Come rain or shine—or sleet, ice or snow—NITACA is committed to keeping drivers safe on the roads. We are here for all professional drivers and couriers throughout the nation.

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