

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARD CONTROL IN ALBERTA'S TRUCKING INDUSTRY

**A GUIDE TO IMPROVING
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY FOR SMALL-
AND MEDIUM-SIZED CARRIERS**

Alberta Motor Transport Association

The logo for the Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) is displayed in a large, white, stylized font. The letters are bold and blocky, with a modern, geometric feel. The 'A' is particularly prominent, with a wide base and a sharp peak. The 'M' and 'T' are also thick and blocky, while the 'A' at the end is similar in style to the first 'A'. The entire logo is centered on the page.

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Author:

Dave A. Elniski (he/him/they) (AMTA)

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Thank You

This work was made possible through the collaborative efforts of AMTA with various external contributors and industry leaders. Thank you all for your participation, contributions, and feedback.

Thank you to those who assisted in the review of this document. Some whom we can name here are Cliff Litke, Erica Cormack, Kelsey Hipkin, Michelle Spacil, Michael Mooney, and Rob Dombowsky.

For those carriers who responded to our telephone survey, thank you for taking the call. Your voice is important to our industry.

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Executive Summary

Psychosocial and psychological hazards need to be addressed by safety management systems in the trucking industry. In addition to the compliance requirements under both federal and provincial legislation, carriers risk falling behind other carriers and industries by not taking steps to mitigate risk from these hazards. However, trucking safety professionals are not as prepared to manage psychological safety; for many, this area of safety still feels new, and trucking-specific resources are scant.

Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) has prepared this guide to addressing psychosocial hazards in trucking company safety programs as a way to assist individuals and carriers in addressing the psychological aspects of their safety programs. By surveying Alberta's trucking industry and working with external contributors with knowledge in this area, ten best practices were identified that carriers can use to address psychosocial hazards and improve the mental health of their workforce. Carriers of all sizes can use this guide, but AMTA specifically chose best practices that small- and medium-sized carriers can reasonably implement.

Whether you are a transportation safety professional, manager, carrier owner, driver, or a person with an interest in the link between safety and mental health, this guide provides you with actionable information for improving psychological safety throughout a carrier's operations.



Chapter 1: How to Use this Guide

Welcome to Alberta Motor Transport Association's (AMTA) carrier's guide to addressing psychosocial hazards. This guide is intended to give small- and medium-sized trucking companies practical direction in addressing psychosocial and psychological hazards in their operations.

Our Intended Audience

This guide is meant for people who are involved in the management of small- and medium-sized carriers and looking for ways to address psychosocial hazards – but don't know where to start. It contains actionable best practices to help these individuals with this task. Individuals at large carriers, truck drivers, safety professionals, and even people outside of the trucking industry will find value in its contents. This guide has been prepared with a focus on small- and medium-sized carriers, but the strategies and applications are easily scalable for organisations of all sizes.

Purpose

AMTA has not created any best practices from scratch, nor do we claim to be specialists in psychological safety. However, trucking companies in Alberta must address this topic in their safety programs, so we have developed a foundational level of knowledge in this guide to help carriers create new programs or improve pre-existing ones.

We have compiled best practices for carriers to use in their operations along with in-depth references for additional guidance. AMTA can be contacted for further help for specific carrier requirements.

At times, text boxes, sidebars, and standalone articles will be used to emphasise the points being made in the sections that follow. These extra contributions are from external contributors who were consulted during the writing of this document; the individual's name will be included, and their biographies can be found in the biography section.



Improved occupational health and safety (OHS) regulations and an industry-driven push to improve working conditions are pressuring carriers to make positive changes. This guide presents pathways to improving the psychological safety in a trucking industry context.

How to Use this Document

This document begins by presenting information about psychosocial hazards and then data we collected from Alberta's trucking industry about this topic. We then present a list of best practices carriers can use to address the psychosocial aspect of their OHS management system.

Carriers struggling to address mental health concerns can take one or more of these best practices and work them into their existing health and safety program. For example, a carrier that is just beginning to consider psychological safety could start with the best practice of systematically identifying psychosocial hazards. Once done and after any obvious hazards have been eliminated or controlled, they could move on to the best practice on fatigue management and use it to address driver scheduling concerns throughout their operations. By picking a suitable best practice, a carrier can build their own program to address psychosocial hazards in manageable increments.

Contact AMTA for more information about how this guide can be applied to a carrier's operations. We'd be happy to help provide guidance and support to all carriers wishing to address psychosocial hazards in their operations.



Chapter 2: Key Terms

The following terms have different meanings in different contexts outside of this guide. To improve this guide's clarity, we will define them here for ease of reference.

Control – a procedure, physical device, personal protective equipment, training, combination thereof, or anything else designed and implemented with the goal of reducing the risk a hazard poses to a person(s).

External Contributors – individuals who possess and are willing to share experience, knowledge, skill, expertise, or a combination of the above that is relevant to a particular topic.

Feasible – when a best practice is deemed feasible in the context of this guide, it means the best practice could be implemented in a reasonable amount of time by a small- to medium-sized carrier.

Hazard – a situation, condition, or thing that may be dangerous to health and safety¹.

Hazard Assessment – a look at the overall operations of an organisation to identify hazards and develop, implement, and monitor related controls².

Industry Best Practice – a process, tool, method, policy, or combination thereof that contributes to outcomes that are generally desirable within an industry.

Medium-Sized Carrier – carriers in the size range of 50 power units and/or staff up to approximately 200 power units and/or staff, or any carrier that does not consider itself to be a small company but also without the resources expected at a large carrier to implement new health and safety practices.

Psychological - of, affecting, or arising in the mind; related to the mental and emotional state of a person³.



Psychological Hazard - elements of the work environment, management practices, or organizational practices that pose a risk to mental health and well-being⁴.

Psychological Safety - the absence of harm and/or threat of harm to mental well-being that a worker might experience⁵.

Psychosocial - a term indicating the combination of psychological, environmental, and societal factors that affect an individual's psychological well-being.

Psychosocial Hazard - a hazard related to the way work is designed, organized, and managed, as well as the economic and social contexts of work⁶. When discussing psychosocial and psychological hazards, psychosocial hazards will be the preferred term when the distinction is not important for the specific context.

Risk - the chance that a hazard will cause harm to a worker. Risk may be assessed before a control is implemented, after a control is implemented, or both.

Small-Sized Carrier - carriers in the size range of 50 or fewer power units and/or staff, or any carrier that considers themselves small in size, not a medium-sized carrier, and without the resources expected of a large company to implement new health and safety practices.



Chapter 3: Psychosocial and Psychological – An Introduction

Trucking's essential nature in Canada can be traced to the early 1900s. World War One saw truck transportation prove itself as an effective means of moving freight, and by the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s, trucking was bringing goods to and from rail stops to consumers⁷. By this time, entrepreneurs and regulators throughout North America had laid the groundwork for long-haul trucking – there was no slowing down the industry's advancement.

Safety-related milestones occurred alongside industry growth. For example, 1978 saw Canada establish the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) to promote workplace health and safety for provincial and federal Canadian employers⁸. Specific to trucking, 1987 saw the publication of Canada's the National Safety Code (NSC) to provide the provinces with a framework for building commercial transportation safety legislation⁹.

As safety regulations have increased to help protect road users, truck drivers, and trucking company workers, trucking has learned to service the economy while adapting to a changing regulatory landscape. It is an industry of constant change and advancement, and while trucking careers can be demanding, safety advocates work hard to ensure technological and business innovation considers worker wellbeing.

Today, psychological safety is an area where further innovation is needed.

Just like other challenges in the industry, carriers vary dramatically in the resources they have available to address psychological safety. A carrier might be a single person and truck; it may also be a massive company with international operations, thousands of power units, and tens of thousands of trailers. The resources available to carriers of different sizes vary considerably.



One day, carriers of all sizes may manage psychological safety with the same competency they exhibit in the management of their NSC requirements. For those carriers who are struggling with this today, though, AMTA is here to offer support and guidance. This is a run we will make together.

“By addressing these issues, we first show our associates that we care about them, but secondly we can address a need that they might not share without some way to stay safe in the process.”

- Ellen Voie, President & CEO, Women In Trucking

“Without having a psychologically safe workplace you cannot have a physically safe workplace. Fear and stress lead to poor performance, distractedness, mistakes, accidents, and inefficiencies. Waiting for an issue to arise before doing something could be too late. Companies that do this well have low turnover, high engagement, employees that go the extra mile, more satisfied customers, better safety records, and stronger financial performance. Take care of your people. They will take care of your customers better and that will result in better financial performance. It does not work the other way around.”

- Kara Gillespie, Trucking Industry Executive

“Leadership development is very important as strong leaders have the biggest impact on reducing psychological hazards in the workplace.”

- Andrew Chambers, Workforce Advisor

Mental Health and the Trucking Industry

Efforts at increasing awareness of mental health concerns have increased in Canada throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The Canadian Mental Health Association (CHMA) has grown from a meeting in a room of a home in 1918 to a national association with offices in each province¹⁰. From an industrial perspective, the Canadian Standards Association’s (CSA Group) first published technical standards for electrical installations and steel bridges¹¹; today, they have published a standard on psychological health and



safety for employers¹². More and more people and organisations are participating in discussions around improving mental health.

Today, psychological safety is a highly-public topic in the workforce; Bell's Let's Talk initiative has become a well-known example of positive mental health promotion familiar to many employees and employers alike¹³. Whether the occupational health and safety of an Albertan employer is regulated federally by the *Canada Labour Code* or by Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, psychological safety is something that today's employers must address. Employers that create psychologically unsafe and toxic workplaces allow risk to enter their organisation; the Governor General of Canada, Julie Payette, resigned in 2021 after a report of toxic working conditions for her staff¹⁴, a demonstration of the consequences of allowing a workplace to neglect the mental wellbeing of its workers.

In other words, yelling isn't a management style anymore. It's harassment.

For many employers in the trucking industry, addressing mental health feels new. Many carriers struggle with other aspects of their safety programs and consider mental health low on their list of safety-related priorities. Others are simply unaware that mental health is something they must consider in their operations, and management and owners of some carriers may be offended to think their actions are contributing negatively to worker mental health. However, as Jill Collins writes in her guide for implementing CSA Group's psychological safety standard, "The workplace is not always part of the problem, but it can choose to be part of the solution"¹⁵.

Psychosocial Hazards and Psychological Safety

While the best practices described later in this document help improve workers' mental health, we need to introduce the language that will be used in the following sections. In general, we will use



“psychosocial hazards” to describe mental health-related dangers present in a carrier’s workplace.

“Psychological hazards” are those hazards which affect the mental wellbeing of workers. Some examples include:

- Stress.
- Uncertainty.
- Violence (both the threat of violence and actual violence).
- Harassment.
- Bullying.

“Psychosocial hazard” encompasses both psychological hazards and hazards arising from social and cultural factors. Examples of psychosocial hazards include¹⁶:

- Job demands that do not allow for a home/life balance.
- Being treated without respect.
- Unclear expectations for work performance.
- Lack of control over one’s work.
- A lack of trust.
- Fear for one’s physical safety when at work.
- Harassment, workplace violence, and bullying.
- Poor management practices.
- Unrealistic workloads.
- Discrimination and cultural insensitivity.

There is considerable overlap in the above two lists. It isn’t important to get caught up in the differences between psychological and psychosocial hazards; what’s important is to understand these hazards are different from other health hazards, like chemical exposure, and safety hazards, like hitting one’s head on the underside of a trailer.

If psychosocial hazards feel new or you are not sure how to address them, that’s okay. The best practices section of this document



presents actionable things a carrier can do to address psychosocial hazards and improve psychological safety. It is important to understand that improving psychological safety isn't an activity that is done separate from other aspects of the company – it spans the entire organisation.

Arguments for Addressing Psychosocial Hazards

In case you need convincing, this section will give three arguments as to why carriers should address psychosocial hazards.

1 - The Sustainability Argument

There are two parts to the sustainability argument. First, there is an occupational health and safety (OHS) compliance requirement for carriers of any size to address psychosocial hazards. Second, psychosocial problems are expensive. If a carrier does not address their legal requirements and these costs, their operations will not be sustainable in the long- or even short-term.

Compliance: The occupational health and safety requirements of provincially-regulated carriers in Alberta are stated in Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. In the *Act*, the maintenance of worker psychological and social wellbeing is listed as a purpose of the *Act*¹⁷; in this *Act* and its *Code*, requirements to address psychosocial hazards like working alone, harassment¹⁸, and “psychological injury or harm” is included in the *Act*'s definition of “violence”¹⁹. While not every type of psychosocial hazard is listed, it is obvious that a safety program lacking any psychological safety measures will be inadequate and put the carrier at risk.

Federally-regulated carriers follow Part II of the *Canada Labour Code* and the applicable regulations for their OHS requirements. Under Part II of the federal *Code*, preventing “psychological injuries and illnesses arising out of, linked with or occurring in the course of employment” is a stated purpose of the legislation, and the definition for “harassment and violence” includes “psychological injury and



illness to an employee”²⁰. Like the paragraph above describing Alberta’s OHS compliance requirements, we again see carriers that federally-regulated must somehow address psychological safety in their safety programming.

Noncompliance with the law will eventually cause a carrier problems. Staff may leave over ethical concerns. Enforcement action can result in fines, action plans, and increased scrutiny.

Cost: There are two main categories of costs that need to be considered: short-term and long-term. A short-term cost example is the immediate financial impacts of a collision; a long-term cost example is increased orientation and training costs resulting from high worker turnover.

Carriers are naturally concerned about preventing collisions. Harm to their drivers and members of the public, insurance deductibles, and the repair costs to equipment cause immediate financial harm. In a 2009 study of heavy vehicle drivers, researchers found an alarmingly high percentage of full-time professional drivers suffering from severe psychological distress resulting in mental impairment comparable to a 0.08% blood alcohol content²¹. Poor psychological safety resulting in on-road impairment can produce extreme and immediate financial costs to a carrier.

While short-term costs may be front and centre for carriers, those wishing to stay competitive in the future need to consider long-term costs as well. Long-term payoffs from managing psychosocial hazards might be harder to see, but payoffs could manifest in ways such as lower worker turnover, greater cooperation and engagement, and more positive interactions between frontline workers and customers. Research has also provided evidence of a positive return on investment (ROI) from workplace mental health initiatives at Canadian employers²²; while it is hard to predict a precise dollar figure as an ROI for a specific carrier, the combination of evidence for long-term savings and a reduction in more obvious short-term costs



should make it clear that investing in psychological safety makes good business sense.

2 - The Labour Shortage Argument

This document was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of great uncertainty and of labour shortages throughout many different industries. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberta's, Canada's, and North America's trucking industry was experiencing a truck driver shortage. According to Trucking HR Canada, COVID-19 caused acute labour shortages in Canada's trucking industry, negatively affecting women and younger workers at a disproportionate rate²³. While acute shortages largely recovered in 2021, the industry entered the pandemic with already-high demands for labour and many employers struggle to staff their fleets adequately in the face of increased industry demand²⁴.

It is important to emphasise that, in Alberta, any unwanted truck driver job vacancies are not due to a lack of licenced drivers. As of 2019, Alberta reported a total of 155,149 Class 1 licence holders in the province²⁵. But, Alberta estimates its number of truck driver jobs at 45,400²⁶. This means there are considerably more Class 1-licenced drivers than there are available jobs, but still carriers report challenges in filling positions. Carriers need to create workplace cultures that both attract new workers and make existing workers to want to stay. This involves understanding truck driver motivation²⁷. It also involves creating a workplace that is attractive, managed by strong, effective leaders who embrace respectful, clear, and collaborative leadership styles.

Leaders with an overly authoritarian and controlling leadership style or any other characteristics that reduce psychological safety may see short-term compliance from workers. But, in the long-term, workers will move to other organisations when they have the option²⁸. This option is available to many workers in trucking. Since drivers are in high demand and enjoy high labour mobility²⁹, organisations that do



not address psychosocial hazards will not be as competitive as those that do.

3 - The Ethics Argument

Addressing psychosocial hazards along with other health and safety hazards shouldn't only be viewed through a business and ROI lens; addressing hazards for the protection of workers is the ethically-correct thing to do. Simply put, improving health and safety is always a good thing.

Occupational health and safety programs, decisions, and practices have moral and ethical implications (moral and ethical being interchangeable terms for the purposes of this guide³⁰). Employers, in the protection of the wellbeing of their workers, have reasons to consider that go deeper than regulatory compliance and finances. Whether through action or inaction, a carrier should not cause harm to people.

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The next chapter presents the results of an industry survey AMTA conducted as part of the writing of this document. We present our list of best practices after the survey.



Chapter 4: Industry Survey on Psychosocial Hazards

AMTA conducted a survey in September of 2021 to get an idea of where small- and medium-sized carriers stand in terms of familiarity with psychosocial hazards and their mitigation. The survey consisted of phone interviews with carrier management, owners, and/or safety representatives from carriers throughout Alberta.

The intention of this survey was to provide a small but measurable *pulse check* of Alberta's trucking industry in the context of psychosocial hazards. As a pilot study, the sample size was kept at 55 to ensure even distribution across the province and enough information to identify potential trends and questions that could be investigated in a larger future study.

Survey Methods

AMTA wanted to assess basic familiarity in Alberta's trucking industry with language around psychosocial hazards. Additionally, we wanted to see to what proportion the industry is aware of their occupational health and safety (OHS) legal responsibilities and if practices are being implemented to mitigate psychosocial hazards.

To select carriers for the above interview, the Alberta Transportation Region & District Offices map was used to identify the boundaries of each of the eleven transportation districts in Alberta³¹. To ensure an even distribution of carriers from across Alberta, five carriers were chosen from each of district.

Carriers were selected by using Google Maps to identify carriers within each district. The phrases "trucking company", "transportation", and "trucking" were used in Google Maps to find companies. The work of selecting carriers and conducting the surveys took place over the month of September in 2021.



AMTA wrote the following five questions which were asked of respondents in each interview:

1. Are you familiar with what are psychological hazards and psychosocial hazards in the workplace?
2. Examples of psychological hazards and psychosocial hazards include bullying, harassment, excessive workloads, violence, and poor management practices. Are you aware of the occupational health and safety legal responsibilities of employers for managing psychosocial and psychological hazards?
3. Does your company currently have any practices for reducing the risks related to psychological and psychosocial hazards?
4. Approximately how many employees and contractors does your organisation direct?
5. Approximately how many power units does your organisation direct?

Before asking the above questions, the interviewer would call the company in question, introduce themselves and AMTA, and request that someone in safety and/or management take the time for the phone interview. Once the interviewer was speaking with the appropriate person at the carrier, the interview was introduced as a survey on psychological safety in the trucking industry being done by AMTA to improve future safety programming.

AMTA was then briefly introduced. It was made clear that AMTA was not a representative of any government or law enforcement agency and that all information collected will be kept confidential. No AMTA



services or memberships were discussed or advertised during the calls.

The intent of Question 1 was to assess industry's familiarisation with the terminology "psychological hazards" and "psychosocial hazards".

Question 2 was prefaced with examples of psychosocial and psychological hazards so that those unfamiliar with the specific language but still aware of this broad category of hazards could provide answers for the rest of the survey. Its intention was to determine if the carrier in question was familiar with the legal obligations of employers to protect workers from these hazards.

The intent of Question 3 was to see if the carrier believed they had any practices in place for addressing these hazards.

Questions 4 and 5 were included to determine carrier size for data analysis. For questions 1 through 3, answers were either a "yes" or "no". Questions 4 and 5 were numerical values.

Once the five questions were complete, the respondent was told the interview was over and thanked for their participation. If the respondent identified any other information of interest about the trucking industry in Alberta, it was recorded in general terms. For example, sometimes at the end of the interview a respondent would add a comment like "We are concerned about is how hard it is to find Class 1 drivers." In such an example, a note was made stating the carrier was concerned over a shortage of licenced drivers.

Survey Results

The answers to questions 1 through 3 were placed into a bar graph as seen in Figure 1 where the percentage of respondents who answered "yes" to the question is plotted as a function of each question.

For Question 1, "Are you familiar with what are psychological hazards and psychosocial hazards in the workplace?", 63.6 % of carrier respondents said yes, indicating the majority had some level of



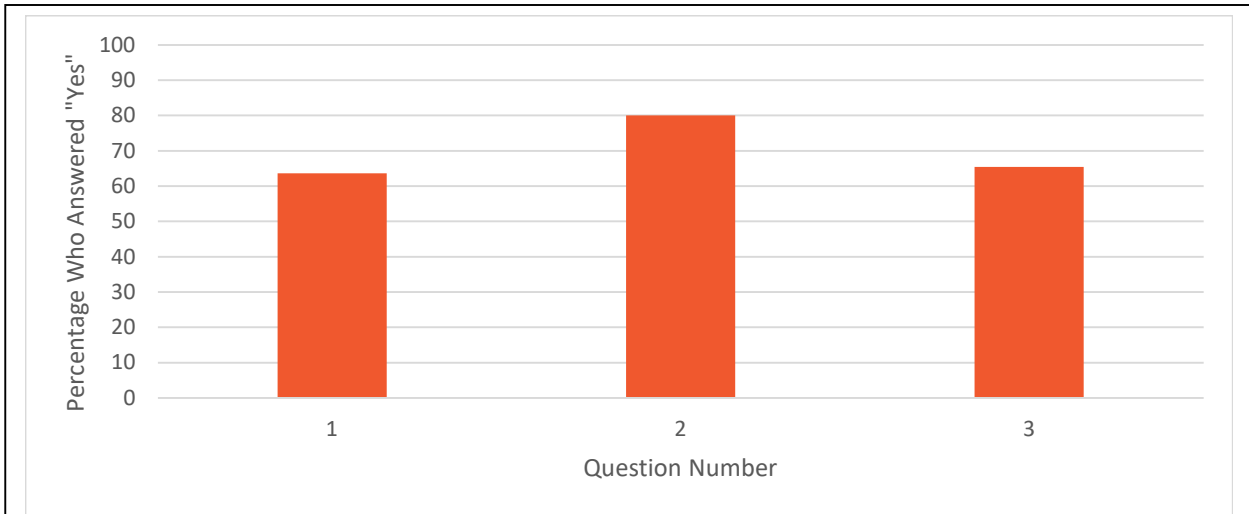


Figure 1 – Percentage of carrier respondents who answered “yes” to the three survey questions. Questions 1, 2, and 3 received a response of “yes” for 63.6 %, 80.0 %, and 65.5 % of carriers, respectively.

familiarity with the terms “psychosocial hazards” and “psychological hazards”. The depth of this familiarity was not assessed.

For Question 2, “Are you aware of the occupational health and safety legal responsibilities of employers for managing psychosocial and psychological hazards?”, 80.0 % of carrier respondents said yes, indicating the majority were aware to a degree of some legal responsibility of their company in terms of managing psychosocial hazards. The depth of this awareness was not assessed.

For Question 3, “Does your company currently have any practices for reducing the risks related to psychological and psychosocial hazards?”, 65.5 % of carrier respondents said yes. The depth or validity of these practices was not assessed.

Questions 4 and 5 were concerned with measuring the size of the carriers surveyed. Figure 2 shows the distribution of carriers in terms of their size. The majority of carriers were either 75 or fewer in terms of personnel and/or power units/straight trucks under the direct control of the carrier.



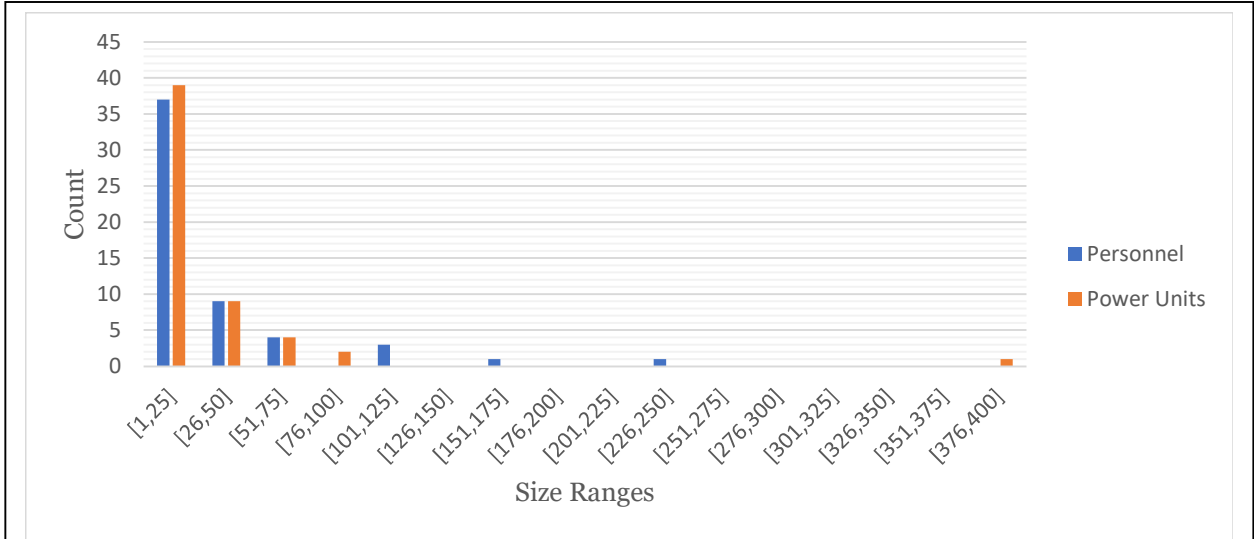


Figure 2 – Histogram showing the distribution of carriers in terms of their size based upon both the number of personnel and the number of power units and/or straight trucks under the direction of the carrier.

Basic data analysis was done to determine the numbers in Table 1. The difference between the average and the median carrier size, both for personnel and power units/straight trucks, shows that while there was a large spread between the sizes of the largest and smaller carriers surveyed, the largest carriers were outliers.

Of all the 55 surveys conducted, 9 carriers brought up concerns about Alberta’s trucking industry at the end of the survey. This information was not requested, but some respondents provided their opinions. Table 2 shows the ranking of these concerns in terms of how many times an individual carrier brought up the same concern.

Measurement	Personnel	Power Units and/or Straight Trucks
Sample size = 55		
Average Carrier Size	27.5	31.5
Median Carrier Size	12	13
Largest Carrier	380	250
Smallest Carrier	1	1

Table 1 – Additional data describing the distribution of carriers selected for the phone survey.



Ranking	Industry Concern
1	Shortage of work (related to oil and gas)
2	Cannot find enough licenced drivers to fill positions
3	Cannot employ licenced but inexperienced drivers (due to insurance reasons)

Table 2 – The top three industry concerns mentioned by carrier respondents. None of this information was requested, but when carriers offered information related to concerns about Alberta’s trucking industry, the responses were collected and ranking in terms of the number of times the same type of concern was mentioned.

Survey Discussion

The first point to discuss about the survey data is the small sample size (n = 55). At this sample size, it is not possible to claim any sort of statistical significance when analysing trends. Furthermore, from Figure 2 and Table 1 it is obvious most carriers interviewed were small-sized carriers, meaning this data is more indicative for small-sized carriers instead of medium-sized ones.

Despite these shortcomings, the survey results are valuable. It was not the intention of AMTA to conduct a thorough and rigorous study of the Albertan trucking industry in terms of psychosocial hazard management; instead, the goal was to investigate, at a high level, the state of the industry in terms of general awareness and management of psychosocial hazards. The results from this survey could serve as a starting point for a larger, more in-depth study.

The first point of discussion is the discrepancy between the percentages of carriers that answered yes when asked if they were aware of their legal obligations to manage psychosocial hazards (80.0 %) and those which answered yes when asked if they have any practices to reduce the risks posed by psychosocial hazards (65.5 %). There is a 14.5 % difference between the results of questions 2 and 3 (see Figure 1 above). Due to the small sample size, we did not assess whether or not this difference is statistically significant, but it is nevertheless a trend worth exploring in greater detail should a future study be conducted.



At this point, we could hypothesise that roughly 80 % of carriers have a basic awareness of their legal obligations to address hazards while also predicting that a statistically significant number of these carriers operate without any practices in place to address these hazards. We can also predict that a large proportion (i.e. approximately 40 %) of small-sized carriers in Alberta are unfamiliar with the specific language used to describe psychosocial hazards. A more detailed survey could then be used to test these predictions using a larger sample size.

It is worth noting that it is a reasonable prediction more small-sized carriers are operating without practices to manage risk from psychosocial hazards than the 65.5 % indicated in the survey. Some carrier respondents may have felt they did not have practices in place to address psychosocial hazards but answered yes anyways. This could have been because they did not want to admit to any non-compliance. Others may also not have trusted their responses would remain confidential and perhaps have associated AMTA with a regulatory body capable of reprisal against them.

Out of all 55 carriers that were interviewed, 9 brought up concerns unrelated to the survey content. These concerns were mainly centered around two themes: insufficient labour and insufficient levels of work (see Table 2 above). Carriers complaining about insufficient levels of work were all involved in the oil and gas segment of the trucking industry, and none of these carriers specifically mentioned being challenged by a lack of labour. While the sample size and impromptu nature of this collected data is such that no strong conclusions can be drawn, it does suggest that trucking companies involved in oil and gas operations are presently more concerned about reduced workloads than they are recruiting licenced commercial drivers.

Given the inclusion of the phrase “psychological and social well-being” in AMTA’s Certificate of Recognition (COR) *COR Auditor’s Guidelines*,³²



it is also a fair assumption that COR-holding carriers are more knowledgeable with regards to psychosocial hazards than non-COR-holding carriers. A future direction this research could go would be exploring the impact of the COR program specifically on practices implemented to address psychosocial hazards in carriers of any size.

The main takeaway from this Alberta-specific industry survey is this: small-sized (and likely medium-sized) trucking companies in Alberta are generally not highly knowledgeable with regards to managing psychosocial hazards in their operations. There is room for improvement in terms of providing carriers with practical, actionable tools they can use to address these hazards in their organisations.



Chapter 5: Industry Best Practices to Address Psychosocial Hazards

This section presents 10 best practices AMTA has identified to help small- and medium-sized carriers address psychosocial hazards. The order given is not meant to represent a ranking; feel free to skip to what seems the most applicable and start your reading there.

1. Policies and Procedures
2. Psychosocial Hazard Assessments
3. Post-Incident Debriefs and Mental Health First Aid
4. EAPs and EFAPs
5. Unconscious Bias Awareness Training
6. Fatigue Management
7. Active Listening Training
8. Using Existing Resources
9. Addressing Pay Structures
10. Addressing Hazards from Working Alone

The following assumption is being made with these best practices: occupational stress creates risk for organisations³³ and is a psychological health hazard^{34, 35}; therefore, practices that reduce work-related stress can help improve psychological safety in an organisation. As a result, some of the above practices are included here not because they are specifically meant to address psychosocial hazards but are included because they help address deeper causes of workplace stress.

Selecting Industry Best Practices to Address Psychosocial Hazards

To identify industry best practices to address psychosocial hazards, we examined each to make sure it was tried and true, feasible, and applicable to our target audience.



Business leaders, safety professionals, working owners, and all others in the trucking industry are often pressed for time; regardless, they are responsible for taking action to address concerns in their organisations. It is AMTA's hope to alleviate some of this pressure by doing the preliminary research and vetting.

1 - Tried and True

As a reminder, we define “industry best practices” as processes, tools, methods, policies, or combinations thereof that contribute to outcomes that are generally desirable within an industry. Basically, to be a best practice in this guide, it must be something that has already been shown to work – either within trucking or outside of but still applicable to trucking.

The best practices listed in the following sections are not experimental; they are tools currently in use at other companies and ready to be put to work at more.

To further explore each best practice, we reached out to people with expertise in the trucking industry and experience addressing psychosocial hazards. The best practice sections will include their contributions.

2 - Feasibility

We have also paid attention to the feasibility of the best practices we are putting forward. Some organisations have sophisticated practices in place to address mental health concerns in their workforces; however, sometimes these practices are only feasible for large companies or companies with a certain operational model (i.e. like a carrier where drivers report to a home terminal daily).

Elements of each of the following best practices should be feasible for the majority of our intended audience. Readers may reach out to AMTA for help in applying these best practices to their organisation; we can direct you to the appropriate resources and experts.



3 - Applicability

Industry best practices are of little value if they cannot be applied to an organisation's operations. Even though it is not possible to provide, in a single guide, answers that will work at all trucking companies, the common elements found throughout Alberta's trucking industry are well-known to AMTA and were used to select best practices that can be applied to most carriers in the Province. Most of the intended audience should be able to take some elements of the best practices we present below.

Disclaimer: AMTA will be presenting possible options in the following sections for carriers to consider when addressing psychosocial hazards; this is done to provide examples. AMTA leaves it up to individuals and companies to assess the suitability of any of the following best practices and resources for their own, specific needs.



Practice 1: Policies and Procedures

Certain negative behaviours are unacceptable in a workplace, and trucking companies need to have policies and procedures in place to address them. These policies then require not only enforcement from company leaders but require modeling, too. All individuals in the organisation need to know the policies, see them enforced, and see people in positions of authority acting in accordance with them.

Overview

Before policies and procedures can be written, implemented, and enforced, the highest authorities in the carrier need to make it clear they support the health and safety system. Management commitment is important; no health and safety system will be able to bring about its best possible safety results without it. Occupational health and safety research consistently link true management commitment to

positive safety outcomes^{36, 37, 38}. As a result, carrier leadership must be seen as aligned with the goals of the safety program and all of its

"I would recommend that a carrier should implement a ZERO tolerance policy for harassment. It has been shown to be the best deterrent for many companies. Basically, it means 'walking the walk' when it comes to harassment activity."

- Ellen Voie, President & CEO,
Women In Trucking

-

"If you're going to say zero tolerance it must be implemented. That is very rare. A process to help eliminate psychosocial hazards through learning and working with your employees will be invaluable."

- David Henry, Professional Driver
and Mental Health Advocate

-

"No one felt safe telling management that the policy was too much because they had not been listened to in the past with safety suggestions and did not know they could make recommendations to change policies."

- Kara Gillespie, Trucking Industry
Executive



policies; if it isn't obvious management stands behind their policies then the policies become lip service.

Behaviours like harassment are not permissible in the workplace. Under the *Canada Labour Code*, it is specifically stated that federally-regulated employers must take steps to prevent, respond to, and investigate incidents of harassment³⁹. For provincially-regulated employers in Alberta, employers, supervisors, and workers all have specific obligations related to the prevention of workplace harassment⁴⁰. Harassment is also specifically listed in Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Code* as a hazard that must be addressed as part of the employer's requirement to identify and address workplace hazards⁴¹.

To adequately address a psychosocial hazard like harassment, a company needs a policy telling workers that harassment is not tolerated in the workplace. The policy should also outline what action the employer will take in response to an incident of harassment; a specific procedure can then be used to explain the steps involved. A carrier should also understand how competent it is in performing harassment, violence, and bullying investigations; some may be beyond the competencies of the carrier and require professional help⁴².

Harassment is just one topic that a policy can help address. Policies and procedures are best practices that, for many organisations, form the foundation of a health and safety program. If an organisation is lacking adequate policies and procedures, this may be the right place to start.

Benefits

Policy writing is a flexible task. It doesn't need to be expensive if the organisation chooses to write their own policies and procedures and, in doing so, create a policy framework unique to their own operational



needs. On the other hand, an organisation may elect to outsource this task. A combination of internal and external resources could be best.

There is also no shortage of free or low-cost help available to guide a carrier in policy and procedure writing. Health and safety organisations like AMTA offer training in this skill⁴³. The Government of Alberta even offers free policy templates organisations can use as a starting point⁴⁴.

Having clear policies and procedures also helps address psychosocial hazards related to uncertainty. According to GuardingMinds@Work⁴⁵ and the CSA Standard for psychological healthy workplaces⁴⁶, clear leadership and expectations are one of the 13 factors linked to occupational psychosocial wellbeing. Policies and procedures that help workers understand what is expected of them will help positively address this factor.

Challenges

The availability of free policy templates and the low cost associated with writing policies internally can make it easy to produce a policy that is far too simple and generic to be of much value to a carrier. Free templates are starting points only and rarely meant to address a specific carrier's needs.

If the owners and management of a carrier know they will never actually enforce or follow aspects of a policy, there is little value in writing it. The organisation needs to have the will to follow through with action that supports the policy, so if it is unlikely this will exist, the carrier needs to address other internal problems before policy will be of any value in addressing psychosocial hazards.

Carriers must also understand that certain psychosocial hazards require specialised training to investigate and handle properly. Incidents of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct should not be investigated and handled by someone not competent to do so; for



privacy reasons, they should also not be investigated by the health and safety committee (if the carrier has one).

More Help

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) offers guidance on writing OHS policies⁴⁷. They are an excellent resource for carriers looking for help. For provincially-regulated carriers in Alberta⁴⁸, free templates can be accessed as starting points and may also be applicable to federally-regulated employers as well (carriers will need to do their own assessment of the template to make sure it meets the legislated requirements that apply to them).

Health and safety organisations like AMTA can provide additional guidance in this area. We may also be able to direct organisations to appropriate professionals who can assist with a carrier's specific needs.



Practice 2: Psychosocial Hazard Assessments

One of the best places to start when addressing psychosocial hazards is by using existing health and safety system elements. This best practice – which is also required under Alberta’s occupational health and safety legislation – provides an organisation with a documented foundation to address mental health concerns.

“It is also important for companies to recognize that in the workplace, psychological and psychosocial hazards are treated the same as other health & safety hazards and must be controlled.”

- Jeremy Woolward,
Fleet Safety Officer

Overview

From the Key Terms section above, a *hazard* is a situation, condition, or thing that may be dangerous to health and safety, and a *hazard assessment* is a look at the overall operations of an organisation to identify hazards and develop, implement, and monitor related controls. Another way to describe a hazard assessment is as a practice. In other words, hazard assessments are something organisations actively *do* to address health and safety concerns.

What is being done when hazard assessments are conducted is that working conditions are being proactively examined for things that might negatively affect a worker’s health and safety. This is not optional; under Alberta’s *Occupational Health and Safety Code*, an “employer must assess a work site and identify existing and potential hazards” both prior to work starting and at regular and at certain pre-defined intervals⁴⁹. In addition, certain psychosocial hazards – namely, workplace violence, harassment, and working alone – must be treated as hazards in the formal hazard assessment process as detailed in the *Code*⁵⁰.

We included this best practice because organisations can reliably identify psychosocial hazards present in their operations only when



they have an identification system in place. Formal hazard assessments are part of this system and, at the very least, increase awareness of these issues. Once these hazards are identified, the carrier can take action to address them. A carrier can't control what it can't identify.

For example, perhaps a carrier has a hazard assessment for the tasks involved in installing tire chains. Since tire chain installation may be done in remote areas and in stressful situations, psychosocial hazards may be present in the form of working alone, angry people visiting the chain area, and stress related to time pressures and challenging driving conditions which can be reasonably expected to occur when tire chains are needed. In addition, it may not be clear to drivers at the carrier when they are expected to drive versus park and wait for conditions to improve, an example of unclear expectations which is another psychosocial hazard⁵¹; clearer policies and procedures may be controls the carrier implements to address this hazard.

Benefits

A critical benefit of implementing this industry best practice is that it helps a carrier to come into compliance with occupational health and safety legislation in terms of addressing psychosocial hazards: provincially-regulated carriers under Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*⁵² and *Code*⁵³, and federally-regulated carriers under Part II of the *Canada Labour Code*⁵⁴. Hazard assessments themselves do not guarantee a trouble-free workplace, but they allow a carrier to describe actual health and safety issues so actionable steps can follow.

In addition, a Certificate of Recognition (COR) through a Certifying Partner like AMTA requires that employers identify psychological health and safety hazards to workers that may arise from performing their duties⁵⁵. Employers looking to obtain a COR will improve their audit performance by incorporating psychosocial hazards into their formal hazard assessments.



Challenges

The biggest challenges employers may face when implementing this best practice are setting appropriate expectations. Identifying psychosocial hazards is of incredible importance when trying to create an environment of psychological safety; however, it is the meaningful action that results from identifying controls to these hazards that ultimately improve the psychological safety of the workers. In other words, this best practice represents an important step in the journey of addressing psychosocial hazards. Once implemented, the next step is to reduce the risk the identified hazards pose to workers by implementing the chosen controls.

More Help

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) provides free resources to employers to better understand and identify psychosocial hazards in their operations⁵⁶. The Government of Alberta also provides free resources to employers to help them understand, identify, and control psychosocial hazards⁵⁷. For trucking- or industry-specific advice on addressing psychosocial hazards, carriers can contact Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA)⁵⁸ or another Certifying Partner⁵⁹ suited to their business. Certifying Partners like AMTA are not-for-profit organisations that work with companies to help improve health and safety within their specific industries.

The CSA Group's voluntary standard *Psychological health and safety in the workplace*⁶⁰ provides guidance on what constitutes psychosocial hazards, and the information in this Standard can be used to help organisations identify psychosocial hazards when conducting formal and site-specific hazard assessments. CSA Group has also published a guide titled *Assembling the Pieces*⁶¹ to help organisations implement their National Standard, *Psychological health and safety in the workplace*. This additional publication, while larger than the actual standard, is simpler to understand and use.



Practice 3: Post-Incident Debriefs and Mental Health First Aid

After a potentially-stressful or traumatic incident occurs, organisations have the option of conducting a post-incident debrief and to apply mental health first aid training. This is a good practice small- and medium-sized carriers can implement, but they must reach out to professionals for specific details on practices best-suited to their workplaces.

Overview

Traumatic events can lead to the development of psychological injuries which may show up in the form of conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)⁶². A post-incident debrief, also known as critical stress debriefing⁶³, attempts to limit the development of conditions like PTSD by providing affected individuals with an opportunity to address their reaction(s) to the incident in a safe setting.

After an incident, a company should investigate to determine root causes to improve future safety performance. The debrief is not an extension of an investigation's interview but is meant to look after the health and safety of the person involved in the incident.

“When employees feel like they are HEARD, it creates a better working space for them.”

- Joy Martin, Transportation Compliance Coordinator

“Incorporate psychosocial events into incident report forms. A good practice is to have examples of reportable events that help staff become aware of psychological and psychosocial situations.”

- Andrew Chambers, Workforce Advisor

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“You can be the most informed carrier in the province, but if those called to lead cannot demonstrate clearly that they care about those who work for them, the knowledge and information are irrelevant. The adage is true: ‘People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.’”

- Jeremy Woolward, Fleet Safety Officer



Conducting a post-incident debrief is also an opportunity to provide mental health first aid training should the organisation provide such training. Mental health first aid training is basic training that provides participants with skills to help people who are showing signs of mental health distress, and courses developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) are available to show people how to recognise and respond to a mental health crisis⁶⁴.

Benefits

Mental health first aid training for workers is a practice which is easy for trucking companies to adopt. Training is provided through external service providers similar to how Standard First Aid and other safety training is done. Once complete, the company will have workers who can use their training to provide immediate and basic mental health care until professional help is available.

Post-incident debriefs are also relatively straightforward to put into practice, although the remote nature of the work done at many trucking companies means workers will not always be in a safe and controlled setting immediately after an incident. Carriers will need to be creative in how they respond to their workers.

The reason why debriefs and mental health first aid training have been lumped together in the same section is because a post-incident debrief is a natural place to be on the lookout for behaviour indicative of a psychological injury. It isn't up to the carrier to treat the injury, but they can help by responding to behaviour changes, providing appropriate support, and directing the affected individual to appropriate resources. To illustrate this last point, a carrier's staff wouldn't attempt to set a broken arm following a collision. Instead, someone with first aid training can provide basic comfort care to the person with the broken arm, contact emergency medical services, and stay with the individual until people with greater training arrive to provide help.



Challenges

Organisations should be cautious about how they approach a post-incident debrief. First and foremost, they need to understand their own limitations and accept that they are likely not competent in treating psychological injuries. Company debriefs alone should not be viewed as a tool to prevent conditions such as PTSD, and a debrief aimed at treating and preventing a psychological injury is a complicated undertaking with debatable efficacy^{65, 66} with some sources recommending mandatory incident debriefing stop altogether⁶⁷. Psychological treatment, like any medical treatment, requires experts and specialists; the carrier should not be attempting to treat acute or chronic mental illnesses through this practice since it is a very superficial strategy meant to raise awareness and identify those who should be referred to advanced treatment.

The key is to see the post-incident debrief as a way for an organisation to show its workers it cares and provide any mental health first aid it is competent in performing. Anything beyond this needs to be delegated to appropriate professionals. Part of the carrier's post-incident response plan should, at a minimum, include a reminder to all affected of what resources are available to them. It should also include guidance to workers and supervisors that distressed individuals should not be left alone or dismissed.

More Help

Mental health first aid training has been developed by the MHCC and is offered through various service providers. For example, St. John Ambulance, a reputable provider of first aid training, offers a course in mental health first aid⁶⁸.

The Canadian Red Cross offers courses in psychological first aid⁶⁹. They offer a variety of course structures from self-care online courses to instructor-led training.



The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides direct services to Canadians from volunteers and staff throughout Canada. The CMHA may be contacted for more information about this section; they also offer critical incident group debriefing as a service, and crisis phone services⁷⁰.

Professional counselors, psychologists, and other mental health experts can provide in-depth advice and services related to the material in this section. Organisations in Alberta can call 211 or visit the 211 Alberta website for listings of suitable service providers⁷¹. Finally, employers should see if their current employee assistance plan (EAP) offers debrief services.



Practice 4: EAPs and EFAPs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAPs) can help workers cope with stress that is impacting their work performance. These programs provide an organisation with additional options to address psychosocial hazards.

Overview

In general, EAPs are offered by employers to their employees and provide short-term counselling services to help workers navigate personal difficulties that are negatively impacting their job performance⁷². EFAPs are like EAPs but also specifically offer services that extend to members of the worker's family.

EAPs provide people with counselling services related to their personal and work lives. A worker may be able to call or otherwise contact their EAP provider to discuss concerns they have with, for example, drug and alcohol use or financial pressures. The counselling services offered through an EAP are in addition to other health benefits an employer may offer.

EAPs are common throughout workplaces in North America, and there is evidence they can provide a positive return on investment by reducing costs related to

"I had a colleague whose elderly mother fell ill in another province, and she was the only responsible child to help find her health care support. She did not know where to start so reached out to the company EFAP who researched all of the social services and long-term care facilities in that area and gave her a list. It cut days of research she would have to have done herself on evenings or weekends or time off of work. It was a huge help and relief."

- Kara Gillespie, Trucking Industry Executive

"Many drivers complain about their Employee Assistance Program. It doesn't offer phone or online counselling. Many drivers can't afford time off from work and Employment Insurance takes too long to kick in. Also, it doesn't give you the option of selecting your own counselor. These programs need to be more accessible to benefit your employees."

- Shelley Walker, Founder & CEO, Women's Trucking Federation of Canada



low work productivity⁷³. As a result, they provide additional tools for small- and medium-sized carriers to address psychosocial hazards.

Benefits

An EAP is relatively simple and easy to set up for workers, and they are a low-cost addition to a benefits package. The company looking for an EAP service does not have to employ their own counsellors or provide a system to track appointments; the EAP service provider does all of this, and the employer only must provide awareness to workers about the EAP and how they can use it.

An EAP provides professional services to help workers cope with multiple stressors. This means the carrier does not have to find appropriate counsellors for the worker; instead, the EAP sets up an interview with the worker to determine who is best able to help them with their specific concerns.

Psychosocial hazards are complex and include stressors workers may be facing in their personal and family lives⁷⁴. Worker family members may also be able to contact the EAP or EFAP provider to access the counselling services.

Challenges

An EAP is not a single solution for workplace psychosocial hazards. While valuable, they will not be effective if workers do not perceive them as valuable⁷⁵. Workers typically are the ones that need to take the initiative to call the EAP provider so, for them to take advantage of the services offered, the EAP must seem attractive enough to make the call worthwhile.

Employers who offer an EAP need to do a good job marketing the benefit to their workers. Workers may also have fears about confidentiality; if a workplace is suffering from low trust, an EAP or other employer-provided counselling services may be met with skepticism and low use.



EAPs are often used more reactively than they are proactively. This is ironic because EAPs provide proactive tools and training for people to improve their coping strategies for a variety of life's stressors. However, if EAP services are sought after a stressful event, the program is being used reactively. If an employer implements an EAP, they should take the time needed to train their staff on how to access the EAP and encourage its use before a negative situation becomes a crisis.

Finally, exercise caution in how much reliance is placed on an EAP. For example, if an EAP is used as a cure-all for psychosocial hazards in an organisation and workers are directed to the EAP for all concerns related to psychological safety, the employer will have failed to address any psychosocial hazards in their operations. Also, since loneliness and isolation are hazardous to mental health⁷⁶, workers could experience isolation if they interpret being sent to the EAP as a sign that their employer doesn't care about them.

More Help

Carriers can contact a variety of EAP and EFAP providers to learn more about this best practice. Existing benefits providers may be able to offer additional information, and a simple internet search will reveal multiple EAP/EFAP options available for small- and medium-sized carriers.



Practice 5: Unconscious Bias Awareness Training

We all have biases of one form or another. Sometimes, we are not aware of our biases even though they may impact our behaviours and thoughts. Unconscious bias awareness training sheds lights on these biases so we may address them directly.

Overview

“Bias”, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is “inclination of prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair.”⁷⁷ Bias means a person has a preferred way of behaving when presented with multiple options, and it’s not uncommon to hear some admit they are biased when providing an opinion. For example, someone might cite their experience as a reason why they prefer a particular type of food or a certain route for their drive home.

Unconscious bias means a bias someone has of which they are not aware but still affects their thoughts and actions. Someone would not admit to unconscious bias affecting their decision making simply because, by definition, they would not be aware of their unconscious biases. They might know they have unconscious biases, but as soon as they discover a specific unconscious bias and bring it into their awareness, it is no longer an unconscious bias and they can now choose to address it.

Organisations like the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) offer training on unconscious bias awareness⁷⁸. The purpose of unconscious bias awareness training is to create an awareness in

“It is important to understand that all workplaces have biases and psychosocial hazards. Reducing these hazards starts with recognizing they exist and then providing support, training, and tools to those who need them.”

- Andrew Chambers,
Workforce Advisor

“There are words for all of us that are ‘triggers’. Some like to claim that this is just a politically correct term for weak people, but every person has this in them. This can even vary from one geographical area to another. So training to be aware of your speech is important. Words matter. This is an easy way to be kind to others.”

- David Henry,
Professional Driver and
Mental Health Advocate



the participants of their unconscious biases so they may address them and monitor their thoughts and behaviours for signs of the bias's influence⁷⁹.

Mental illness sufferers often face discrimination due to associated stigma⁸⁰. Similarly, psychosocial hazards must contend with stigma as well; some people and organisations do not consider them equal to health and safety hazards that can result in physical injuries or illnesses. If an organisation has the will to address psychosocial hazards but struggles with taking them seriously or understanding them, unconscious bias awareness training provides one possible way to address these issues.

If a company knows many of its staff make disparaging jokes about psychosocial hazards, it may not be able to successfully implement any meaningful measures to control these hazards until it has greater staff buy-in. Addressing biases against these hazards may be the first logical place for an organisation to start.

Benefits

Unconscious bias awareness training can be done through a variety of learning formats suitable to small- and medium-sized trucking companies. From short webinars to hiring consultants who possess the Canadian Certified Inclusion Professional (CCIP) designation through the CCID⁸¹, organisations are likely to find a training model that suits their unique operational demands and workforce.

Like some of the other best practices suggested in this paper, unconscious bias awareness training may help address other concerns within an organisation. For example, a carrier may need to address unconscious biases within their workforce and management before they are able to successfully retain a diverse workforce. In an article about this subject, Briana Perry writes "although unconscious bias is often hidden from one's own perception, it is still perceivable



by others”⁸²; this training could help organisations understand why some of their internal problems exist.

Challenges

Training in unconscious bias awareness will require active participation. If people are not willing to take the training seriously it will be of little value; if the company’s leaders hint at the training not being worthwhile, staff will not find the training effort to be sincere and not feel as motivated to participate. A safe space for dialogue and different opinions is essential, so this best practice will be hard to implement if the carrier isn’t confident they can provide such an environment.

Unconscious bias awareness training in its simplest form sheds light on biases. Once a bias is identified, the person must then take action to confront it: a simple idea, but not necessarily easy⁸³. Like a hazard assessment, once the concern has been identified, action is then required. Unconscious bias awareness training without a commitment to act will not bring about meaningful change, so while this training will be a part of psychosocial hazard prevention programs, it will likely not be the only part.

More Help

Service providers and consultants may form a significant part of an organisation’s approach to unconscious bias awareness training. Organisations like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)⁸⁴ and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)⁸⁵ can provide guidance in this area.



Practice 6: Fatigue Management

Addressing fatigue may be the best practice in this paper about which most carriers are best equipped to implement. Hours-of-service (HOS) rules are well-known, understood, and applied in Alberta's trucking industry; this section will describe how psychosocial hazards can be addressed through fatigue management and the role of HOS compliance in this effort.

Overview

HOS rules are legal limits to how much work and driving a commercial driver can do in a given period of time; they also provide minimum rest times and specify how drivers and carriers are supposed to document these times to demonstrate compliance. In Alberta, commercial drivers are required to follow the HOS rules that apply to their carrier's operations. Provincially-regulated carriers must comply with Alberta's *Drivers' Hours of Service Regulation*⁸⁶; federally-regulated carriers follow Canada's *Commercial Vehicle Drivers Hours of Service Regulations*⁸⁷.

Fatigue, according to the implementation guide for the North American Fatigue Management Program (NAFMP), "can best be defined as combinations of symptoms that include mental and physical elements, impaired performance, and subjective feelings of alertness"⁸⁸. There are many reasons why someone may experience acute and chronic fatigue, and being tired is not the same as being fatigued⁸⁹ - even though these terms are often used interchangeably.

It is important to understand the differences between a carrier's management of their compliance with HOS rules and their management of fatigue. HOS rules were built based on the belief that

"Reducing fatigue is a combination of sufficient workplace incentives to minimize stress on drivers that might lead to risk."

- Dr. Michael H. Belzer, Professor of Economics

"Getting enough sleep at the right time is as essential to survival as food and water."

- Sadia Naqshbandi, Program Lead



long hours spent working and driving cause fatigue, so to reduce collisions involving fatigued commercial drivers, laws were made in Canada and the USA to set work shift limits and minimum rest times⁹⁰. This well-intentioned effort certainly addresses elements of fatigue – after all, everyone needs breaks from work and time to sleep – but the rules do not, by themselves, address all factors that contribute to fatigue.

Carriers must comply with HOS rules and manage their records of duty statuses, but to move beyond HOS management and into fatigue management, carriers must accept that HOS-compliant drivers will still be, at times, fatigued despite having lots of time left in their legal work limits. Addressing factors such as drivers' overall health, changing from night shifts to day shifts, quality and location of sleep, and ensuring drivers understand they have the right to park and rest for safety reasons at any time are some of the elements that should be included in a fatigue management program⁹¹.

The reason why fatigue is being addressed in this guide is because it relates to psychosocial hazard prevention. While fatigue by itself is a workplace issue worth addressing, being in a fatigued state compounds other issues and contributes to poor health and relationships. On the Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety's (CCOHS) website on fatigue, it is easy to see how workplace concerns over fatigue overlap with concerns related to psychosocial hazards⁹². In other words, we are discussing fatigue because we believe doing so can improve psychological safety.

Benefits

When it comes to fatigue management, trucking companies generally have an advantage over companies in other industries because carriers are already accustomed to managing HOS compliance through paper-based logbooks, timecards, and electronic logging devices (ELDs). While HOS compliance alone does not constitute a good fatigue management program, it does mean many tools are



present that can be leveraged to help address fatigue. Other industries which develop fatigue management programs don't start with all these tools in place.

Like other practices mentioned in this paper, fatigue management will pay off in other areas of the organisation. Fatigue is a factor in various health concerns and can lead to a decline in job performance, so addressing it can be part of a more holistic approach to company improvement.

Finally, it feels good to be rested. Doing anything to help staff simply feel better is a positive change for any organisation.

Challenges

Fatigue for some workers may be the result of operational demands which can be difficult to address. Some jobs require long days and demanding conditions; for others, schedules are erratic. These operational demands may be foundational to a business, and changes proposed to address fatigue can be faced with economic backpressures.

Implementing a fatigue management program will not be simple, either. There are fantastic resources like the NAFMP that are available to carriers, and there are service providers who can provide services and consultation in this area. Carriers must understand their limits and seek help when needed.

More Help

The North American Fatigue Management Program (NAFMP) is a resource available to trucking companies to assist in the implementation of a fatigue management program⁹³. Designed specifically for the trucking industry in North America and the result of collaboration between AMTA and many other organisations and subject matter experts, this program is available to small- and medium-sized carriers to address driver fatigue.



Carriers can reach out to organisations like the Canadian Sleep Society⁹⁴ to learn more about improving sleep quality. Governments⁹⁵ and organisations like the Canadian Council for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)⁹⁶ offer free resources to address fatigue and can serve as a starting point when building a fatigue management program.

Individuals and organisations should discuss issues related to fatigue with appropriate health care professionals, especially if there are specific concerns about the health and wellbeing of staff. Family physicians and health authorities like Alberta Health Services can provide guidance on finding the right health care professional for this issue.

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Before we continue with the next best practice, we have included an essay by Dr. Ronald R. Knippling written specifically for this AMTA guide. Dr. Knippling is an American scientist with expertise in driver fatigue and human factors. He is also the author of *Safety for the Long Haul*, a textbook on large truck crash causation and prevention that is referenced multiple times in this guide⁹⁷.



Guest Essay: Health & Wellness ≈ Alertness & Happiness

Ronald R. Knipling, Ph.D.

In the areas of health, wellness, and lifestyle, the North America people have trended toward two separate and disparate cultures. Part of our population is more active and health-conscious than ever. For these North Americans, health and fitness are trending. They are seen both as fashionable and part of everyday life. Meanwhile, a second segment of our society has become more sedentary, chronically overweight, and prone to diseases like Type II Diabetes.

Unfortunately, commercial drivers are overwhelmingly on the wrong side of our societal health and wellness schism. The U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH; Sieber et al., 2014) conducted a roadside survey of U.S. truck drivers. It found unhealthy characteristics like obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure to be about twice as frequent among CMV drivers as among

other adults. The textbox lists common but preventable health risks for commercial drivers. All of these risks can be eliminated or greatly reduced through *behavioral* health.

Sound sleep is a fundamental component of health and happiness, along with diet, exercise, avoiding substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, cigarettes), and positive relationships. Many drivers need help in all of these areas, and companies are wise to invest in driver health and wellness. Safety benefits include improved performance, reduced vulnerability to health crises (e.g., heart attacks), and improved driver

Preventable Health Risks for Drivers

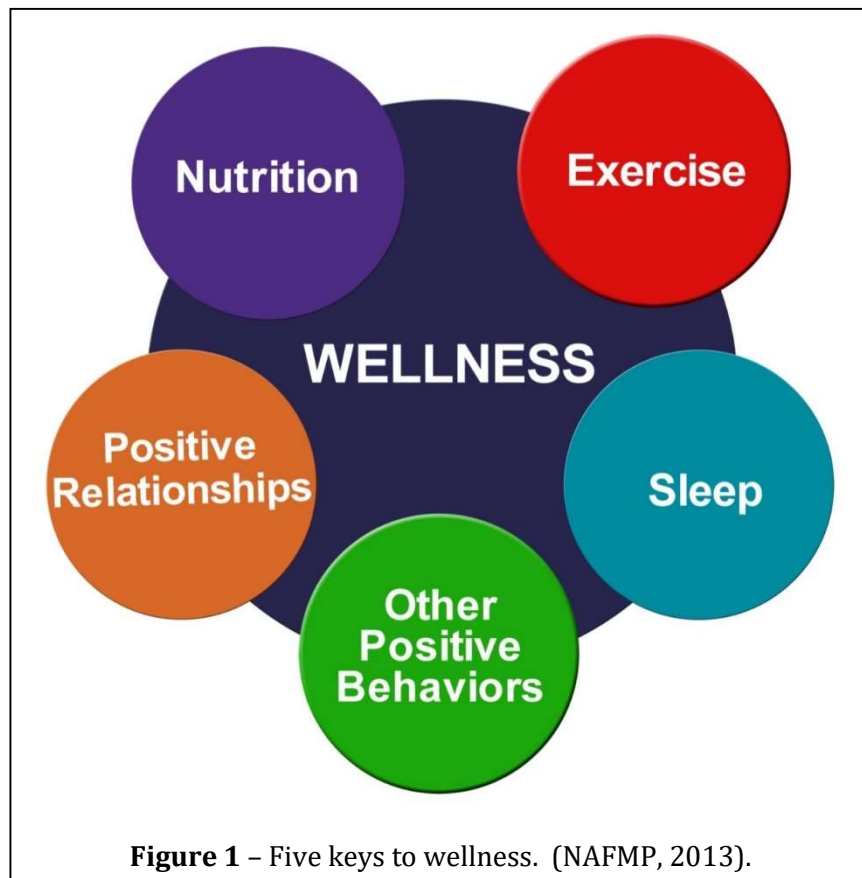
- Smoking and tobacco use
- Obesity or just being overweight
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Cardiovascular disease (heart & circulatory)
- Sleep apnea & other sleep disorders
- Poor eating habits, diet & nutrition
- Lack of physical activity/fitness
- Abuse of over-the-counter, prescription, or illegal drugs
- Psychological stress; job and/or family-related.

Source: Krueger, 2008.



retention, especially for drivers in their 50s and early 60s. Chronic drowsiness and physical fatigue are probable indicators of sleep disorders, other medical conditions, drug (legal or illegal) problems, and/or poor personal sleep hygiene habits.

Figure 1 is from the North American Fatigue Management Program (NAFMP). It illustrates five keys to driver health and wellness. Start with a nutritious diet. Other keys include exercise, sleep, other positive behaviors (like not smoking), and positive relationships. Changing behavior in these five areas brings personal wellness, better performance, and more happiness to life.



Driver distraction is perhaps today’s “hottest” traffic safety topic. People often equate driver *alertness* to driver *attention* to roadway events. Thus, they may assume that alertness *equals* safety. Yet, fully awake drivers can misbehave and make plenty of mistakes. A truer generalization is that *alertness equals wellness*. Chronic



drowsiness/fatigue indicates probable behavioral and/or medical health problems. On the positive side, consistently high-performing drivers are usually healthy and happy drivers. Much of fatigue management in a fleet is simply promoting driver health and wellness.

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Practice 7: Active Listening Training

Active listening is critical for effective communication. All members of organisations benefit from clear communication, and it has the potential to address psychosocial hazards in addition to other organisational issues.

CSA Group's National Standard *Psychological health and safety in the workplace* lists, among others, organisational culture, clear leadership and expectations, civility and respect, and engagement as factors to assess when building a psychologically safe workplace⁹⁸. As explained in this section, active listening promotes clarity, respect, trust, and improved communication, so it is easy to see how this best practice can help a carrier address psychosocial hazards.

Overview

Active listening can be defined as listening for the purpose of understanding the other person as opposed to listening for the purpose of providing a response⁹⁹. It is a teachable skill which helps someone do two important things: understand messages others are trying to convey and show another person that they are being listened to and understood. Being ignored is a terrible insult; active listening is the opposite of ignoring someone and is a relationship-building tool.

Active listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing just means a message was heard through the ears; active listening means the

"Listening is one of the most important skills you can have in the business world today, regardless of your position. It helps you truly understand what people are saying in conversations and meetings (and not just what you want to hear, or think you hear)."

- Shelley Walker,
Founder & CEO,
Women's Trucking
Federation of Canada

"Don't just say you have an open-door policy. Do it."

- David Henry,
Professional Driver
and Mental Health
Advocate



message was both heard and understood. In brief, active listening means the listener must engage with the speaker to confirm they understand. Good posture, eye contact, periodically saying something to show the speaker they are being heard, and repeating back the message to make sure it was understood are all elements of active listening¹⁰⁰.

Having someone actively listen to you is empowering and shows respect. Most people want to, at times, tell stories and express themselves. To do this in a satisfying manner, an audience of at least one other person is required. In interpersonal relationships, active listening allows two people to communicate with a deep level of understanding. Messages are understood and environments of trust are made possible through respectful listening and discourse.

Workplaces require some people to pass messages to others. These messengers must first understand what it is they must pass on. Active listening helps the messenger understand the message as it is communicated to them, and it helps those who must later receive the message follow through on any action.

Benefits

The benefits of active listening should be obvious to any business leader since businesses work best when communication is being done to a high standard. Many small- and medium-sized carriers may already use active listening training to help their managers and staff for a variety of operational reasons. Communication problems are root causes for many problems beyond psychosocial hazards, so training staff in this skill will have value beyond the health and safety program.

Active listening helps build trust and shows respect for the speaker. When reciprocated, teams function better and messages are passed along effectively. There isn't a part of an organisation that does not



benefit from improved communication by staff who can listen actively.

Active listening training is simple to do. Free resources exist online and books are available for purchase that cover this skill if a carrier wants to build their own training program. Unlike some of the other practices in this paper, active listening training carries less risk if a carrier attempts to take on the task themselves. The training could be as simple as providing a resource for staff to read and scheduling meetings to discuss the readings and practice the skills presented in them. Such an approach can be very cost effective, too.

Challenges

Active listening is a skill that is improved through practice. This means active listening training will be most effective when there are opportunities to practice the skill in psychologically safe places. Participants will need to be comfortable and willing to participate in such training. If there are major trust problems present in the workplace, this training may not be a good idea until other problems are addressed.

Since this is a skill, practice is key. A single facilitated session may be a great way to start, but carriers will need to be mindful of costs related to ongoing training.

More Help

Organisations like the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)¹⁰¹ and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)¹⁰² offer resources related to active listening. Organisations like CMHA also offer training related to promoting psychological safety in workplaces, and participants will find elements of active listening in such training since it is often taught as part of courses that cover additional topics or have a different focus.

Service providers with titles such as leadership coach, management consultant, and communication specialist offer versions of active



listening training or communication training that covers active listening principles. Carriers are advised to reach out to providers and see what options exist that are best suited to their unique operating environments. If possible, obtain references for individuals and companies providing these services to see if they are positively recommended by other users.



Practice 8: Using Existing Resources

Carriers struggling with or confused about psychosocial hazards should know they are not alone. Many other companies and organisations are struggling to address these hazards from an occupational health and safety standpoint.

Fortunately, organisations have created and published resources to help companies address psychosocial hazards. This section will discuss some of what is available to small- and medium-sized carriers in Alberta.

Overview

Creating a safety program to address psychosocial hazards can seem like an overwhelming task. While many of the practices listed in this paper likely require professional help at some point in their implementation, carriers can use free resources to at least plan their approach.

Just because a resource is free doesn't mean its quality is questionable. Organisations interested in improving health and safety at workplaces frequently

provide free material in the spirit of promoting their message. For an organisation that wants to see psychosocial hazards mitigated, free resources allow them to remove the cost barrier to accessing their knowledge.

"WCB has a wonderful training program on psychological injuries in the workplace [...] St. John Ambulance Standard First Aid classes now have a mental health section in all first aid classes."

- Joy Martin,
Transportation
Compliance
Coordinator

"I recommend to small and medium sized carriers that they visit the Alberta Labour & Immigration webpage and do some additional reading on the nature of hazard management and control and consider how best they can manage psychological and psychosocial hazards in their workplace."

- Jeremy Woolward,
Fleet Safety Officer



Benefits

An obvious benefit to free resources is their price. Carriers are free to pay for services to address problems in their workplaces, but they can at least start learning through free resources and then make educated purchasing decisions should they decide to purchase a service or product.

Due to the multitude of freely-available information related to psychosocial hazards, carriers do not have to take a single approach. They can borrow elements from different sources to craft a strategy that makes sense for their operations.

Challenges

The last paragraph above is also one of the challenges with free resources: there is a lot of information to sift through. This is one of the concerns AMTA is addressing through this publication: to do the research for carriers and provide them with options that are likely to work using our understanding of Alberta's trucking industry.

Some resources are very generic. When this is the case, the carrier may have to reach out to the organisation that published it for specific information or guidance to see how to apply the recommendations in the resource to their operations.

Finally, taking a free resource and only doing a surface-level implementation does not constitute due diligence. In safety, due diligence "means that employers shall take all reasonable precautions, under the particular circumstances, to prevent injuries or incidents in the workplace."¹⁰³ Carriers need to measure their psychosocial hazard mitigation efforts against this definition.

Where to Find Resources

One of the most prominent resources carriers can use to address psychosocial hazards is the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA Group) National Standard of Canada *Psychological health and safety in*



the workplace, a voluntary standard to address psychological and psychosocial hazards¹⁰⁴.

Implementing the above CSA Standard is complex. To help in its implementation, CSA Group has also published *Assembling the Pieces*, a guide on how to implement the CSA Standard¹⁰⁵.

The CSA Standard contains a section discussing 13 workplace factors that affect psychological health and safety¹⁰⁶. These were developed from GuardingMinds@Work, an online resource employers can use to create a workplace-specific action plan¹⁰⁷. These 13 psychosocial workplace factors are:

1. Balance.
2. Civility and Respect.
3. Clear Leadership and Expectations.
4. Engagement.
5. Growth and Development.
6. Involvement and Influence.
7. Organisational Culture.
8. Protection of Physical Safety.
9. Psychological Competencies and Demands.
10. Psychological Protection.
11. Psychological and Social Support.
12. Recognition and Reward.
13. Workload Management.

Carriers can access the CSA Standard¹⁰⁸ and GuardingMinds@Work¹⁰⁹ for details on these factors, with GuardingMinds@Work more specifically aimed at providing an action plan for employers.

The Government of Alberta offers a variety of free resources, from research reports¹¹⁰ to occupational health and safety-specific bulletins and resources to prevent harassment, workplace violence, and psychosocial hazards¹¹¹. The Federal Government of Canada also offers similar resources¹¹².



The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) offers a variety of mental health resources and training for people throughout Canada. They offer specific workplace mental health training for employers to help create psychological safety for their workers¹¹³. Not all CMHA services are necessarily free; employers can contact CMHA for more information on their services.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) has a detailed library on information about occupational health and safety. Specific to psychosocial hazards and mental health, they offer resources which can be accessed at no cost¹¹⁴ in addition to paid training.

Trucking HR Canada is a Canadian not-for-profit organisation that provides a wealth of resources on a wide range of human resource-related topics in Canada's trucking industry. They have previously published a best practices resource for trucking employers called *Gearing Up for Workplace Mental Health*¹¹⁵ which presents additional best practices and resources for carriers across Canada.

Finally, health and safety associations like AMTA can work with employers to find resources appropriate to their operations. AMTA supports Alberta's trucking industry and employers who have commercial fleets whose primary business isn't the transportation of freight or passengers.



Practice 9: Addressing Pay Structures

Stress and money often are closely linked. This section will discuss how carriers may be able to address psychosocial hazards through their driver pay structures. The practice of addressing psychosocial hazards embedded in pay structures is meant to provide carriers with ideas for how they can improve psychological safety for their driver workforce.

“While piecework compensation lines up the employer’s incentives with the employee’s incentives, it runs the risk of pressuring the driver in a way that creates more fatigue and psychosocial stress. I suspect the easiest way to blunt this stress is to make sure that drivers are paid for all non-driving work time. This can be done by paying mileage (the piecework component) and hours (the hourly wage part), just as contracts used to require before deregulation in 1980. The other side of the bargain (lining up incentives) probably can be guaranteed by using the Global Positioning System (GPS) information that carriers now usually have to manage driver down time and ensure they aren’t ‘shirking’. That would both reduce stress on the drivers (they aren’t giving up 25% of their time, as surveys show they are in the US, on average) and it would increase supply chain efficiency.

Carriers would have to pay drivers and charge shippers and receivers (‘cargo owners’) for this time. Once these freight customers have to pay for the time, they will conserve it, raising national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the process and stopping the waste of driver/carrier time that leads to recruiting and retention problems, industry wide.”

- Dr. Michael H. Belzer, Professor of Economics

Overview

Financial, mental, and physical wellness are considered three pillars of good health by the Government of Canada¹¹⁶. Most people can likely relate to the stress that comes from financial pressure; this stress can lead to poor psychological health.

In the trucking industry, pay structures vary dramatically between different companies or even between jobs within a single company. Sometimes work is based on productivity (like being paid by the mile or by the load); pay might be based on time spent on the job. Other



pay models may be hybrids; for example, a driver may be paid a mileage rate for miles driven, and then paid an hourly rate for time spent performing other non-driving work for the carrier.

While there are many different pay structures that exist and often differing opinions on what is fair pay, a carrier should examine its pay structure to see if there are pay-related psychosocial hazards. Some pay systems contribute negatively to psychological safety¹¹⁷.

It doesn't take much imagination to see how a driver could experience significant psychological stress from their pay structure. If, for example, a driver is stopped at a location for reasons outside of their control (such as a vehicle breaking down or a load not being ready) and because they are not driving, they are not getting paid, this

"Drivers have been long overdue for fair and equal pay. Drivers need to be paid for everything they do. Does any other job give two hours waiting time for free?"

- Shelley Walker,
Founder & CEO,
Women's
Trucking
Federation of
Canada

individual will likely feel their pay system is unfair and get angry as a result.

Situations occur in the trucking industry where drivers lose money for reasons outside of their control, and these situations can result in stress, anger, and emotional blowups¹¹⁸. The perception of a pay structure's fairness falls under "Recognition and Reward", one of the GuardingMinds@Work¹¹⁹ and CSA psychosocial hazards. According to the CSA Standard on psychological safety, "An organization with a good recognition and reward program would be able to state that [...] workers are paid fairly for the work they do"¹²⁰;

what constitutes "paid fairly" can be debated, but there are certainly situations where a productivity-based pay structure will not fairly pay a driver. Such situations present psychosocial hazards.

It isn't simply about increasing gross pay; it's about giving control, power, and predictability to drivers so they know they are being fairly compensated even when things beyond their control go poorly.



Something as simple as offering wait time pay for mileage-based pay structures can go a long way to reduce the stress drivers feel when they are delayed.

Overall gross pay amounts matter too, though. In a recent study involving the major US carrier J.B. Hunt, higher wages could predict increased driver tenure and reduced collision rates resulting from greater driver experience¹²¹. Since Canada's trucking industry is struggling to attract and retain drivers¹²², looking at driver pay structures – their method of paying and overall amounts of pay - may help attract workers to trucking in addition to addressing psychosocial hazards.

Benefits

Pay structures are largely within the control of the carrier, at least in terms of how pay is calculated. Gross, overall pay amounts are subject to gross revenues which are not completely controllable by the carrier, but the carrier can decide how to pay drivers based on their time and productivity. For example, a pay-by-the-mile carrier could change their pay deal so mileage and wait time are taken into consideration, even if the overall gross pay remains the same.

Addressing pay structure also doesn't require driver training; a simple email or memo could be enough to outline the changes. While other best practices suggested in this guide require a time and financial investment for training, this practice does not (at least for those workers to whom the new pay system applies; administrative staff training will likely still be required).

Finally, addressing pay can help a carrier be more competitive from a labour standpoint. If competing carriers have largely moved past a certain type of pay deal because drivers find it unattractive, other carriers may want to make similar changes.



Challenges

One reason why some pay structures exist is because they are easy to calculate. Mileage or percent-of-gross pay systems are relatively easy to calculate and factor into freight rates. Alternative pay structures may be challenging to implement and require more administrative time.

Pay structures should be done in consultation with professionals who can offer the necessary accounting, tax, and legal advice. Getting this help represents an initial investment.

Finally, carriers should have realistic expectations for modifying a pay deal. What is considered fair pay can be subjective, and some individuals may never be satisfied with their pay. Carriers should examine how they pay drivers to see if psychosocial hazards exist because of pay problems, but they should also accept that they will never please everyone in every situation.

More Help

AMTA recommends that carriers consult with an expert in compensation such as a compensation consultant or lawyer if they are at all unsure about how to pay their workers legally.

Carriers should have a good understanding of industry pay rate averages and types of common pay structures for the type of work they do; this is an important part of being connected with their industry. Organisations like AMTA offer additional information and networking events to help carriers establish the connections needed to keep current.



Practice 10: Addressing Hazards from Working Alone

Working alone is experienced differently by different people. Some may prefer to work largely or completely alone; others may suffer when they do not have regular contact with other people. Regardless of how working alone is experienced, it is a hazard requiring mitigation. It also plays a role in an organisation's level of psychological safety.

This section will mostly focus on drivers. But, carriers may have staff working alone in other roles, and this information will apply in such cases.

Overview

Working alone is common to varying degrees within the trucking industry. Some drivers work alone in their cabs while surrounded by other traffic. Others may drive in remote areas where there is no other traffic for long periods of time. A driver may have a swamper one day but is then alone the next.

Working alone presents its own health and safety hazards. Workers who are alone will not have the same level of access to medical help as workers in populated workplaces. Depending on their location, a sole worker may become the target of workplace violence. From a psychosocial standpoint, working alone means signs of worker distress may not be detected by co-workers in a timely manner. If working alone leads to feelings of disconnection with work, unclear expectations, and a lack of social support, psychological health and safety will suffer¹²³.

“Employees who utilize a functional working alone policy and process will know that there is someone checking on them and that they are required to regularly check in. This adds to psychological safety and provides knowledge that they are cared for by their employer. Further, a functional working alone policy helps to address the employer’s OH&S obligation to reasonably protect the employee.”

- Andrew Chambers,
Workforce Advisor



There are also occupational health and safety (OHS) compliance requirements for provincially-regulated carriers in Alberta related to working alone. Part 28 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Code* provides specific criteria for when a worker is considered to be working alone¹²⁴. According to guidance information from the Government of Alberta¹²⁵, a driver on a highway - where help from other drivers is reasonable to expect in a timely manner - would likely not be considered working alone by Alberta's OHS *Code*; however, if the highway is not busy or the driver is operating in a remote area, the working alone rules would apply.

Alberta's OHS *Code* also lists working alone as a hazard that must be addressed in an employer's hazard assessments¹²⁶. Addressing hazards from working alone isn't optional: it's legislated.

While the phrase "working alone" does not appear in either the *Canada Labour Code*¹²⁷ or in the *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*¹²⁸, federally-regulated carriers are still required to "develop [...] a prescribed program for the prevention of hazards in the work place appropriate to its size and the nature of the hazards in it"¹²⁹. Given how common hazards from working alone are in the trucking industry, it would be hard to omit these hazards while demonstrating due diligence.

Addressing working alone as a hazard is a way carriers can not only comply with legislation referenced above. It represents a best practice by which carriers can bolster their efforts to improve psychological safety. Workers who, despite working alone, know they will be checked up upon by their carrier will likely have some of their mental burdens eased. Additionally, electronic support from the carrier while the worker remains alone may be better than having individuals paired together if the pairing can lead to additional psychosocial hazards like bullying, harassment, and violence.



Benefits

As described in the section above, carriers that address hazards from working alone will be addressing specific compliance requirements. This will help reduce financial and reputational risks to the carrier that can result if the carrier were to be non-compliant.

Truck driving can be an isolating profession. While many people enjoy the feelings of independence that come from trucking, many still want to know they have the support of their company. A company with a reputation for supporting its drivers will be more competitive from a labour attraction and retention standpoint.

Since carriers often employ vehicle tracking technology, in-cab dispatching systems, and electronic logging devices (ELDs), a carrier may find they already have equipment in place to build a robust working alone safety program. Carriers currently without these systems will find many cost-effective options available to them.

Challenges

In trucking, carriers need to strike a careful balance between the hazards of working alone and the hazards that come from working with others. While pairing people together may seem like the most logical solution to working alone hazards, if the pairing brings additional risks it may be better to have workers remain alone and opt for electronic devices to ensure workers are always in touch with the carrier. Having two workers in isolation together brings up hazards from sexual and racial harassment, violence, and bullying. Carriers will need to exercise caution in establishing teams and pairings, opting for electronic surveillance as a hazard control instead of pairing if there is a risk of psychosocial violence.

Another major challenge carriers will face when building a working alone safety program is going deeper than the first point of contact. It is easy to assign an on-call phone to someone on staff so drivers and other remote workers have around-the-clock access to the carrier.



However, such an approach will be of little use if the person answering the on-call phone lacks procedures for providing assistance. Carriers will need to have some basic emergency response plans in place for foreseeable problems; if they are using regularly-scheduled check-ins, there will need to be an actionable plan for when a worker fails to respond to a check-in.

There is also likely not a single, basic working alone program that will fit all of a carrier's needs - especially if the carrier has over-the-road operations. If the carrier's plan requires cell phone service, such a plan will only work where there is cell phone coverage. That's not to say a cell phone-based program is inadequate; it just means a carrier needs to plan for times when cell service is unavailable.

More Help

A carrier must, at a minimum, comply with the legislation that applies to their operations. AMTA has provided references in the sections above to legislation for both federally- and provincially-regulated carriers. In addition, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) provides general information for precautions for working alone¹³⁰.

Through a quick internet search, a carrier will be able to find numerous vehicle telematics providers who can outfit a carrier's vehicles with electronic equipment to monitor the vehicle, provide accurate location updates, and communicate with the driver. Many of these telematics providers also offer electronic logging devices (ELDs, which are mandatory for federally-regulated carriers¹³¹) and systems to help with dispatching, so a carrier can likely find a system that can do much more than assist with a working alone program. Some of these systems use satellite connections to send data, meaning they work even when cell service is not available.

For carriers looking for ELDs to comply with Canada's Federal ELD rule, they must pick a device from the list of Transport Canada-



certified ELDs to find out what ELD providers are approved for use in Canada¹³²; if they also have operations in the USA, they must also ensure the ELD is on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) list of registered ELDs¹³³. Once they know the ELD is legal in both countries, then they can see what telematics options the supplier provides.



Chapter 6: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – An Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies are beyond the scope of this document; however, the link between them and psychosocial safety is. This section is not a best practice; instead, it is a brief introduction to diversity and inclusion, references to places you can go for more information, and reinforcement of the idea that respect and tolerance are critical for psychological safety.

Overview

According to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) ¹³⁴, diversity “is about the individual [and] is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities and characteristics we all possess”; inclusion, on the other hand, “is about the collective [and] creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts and values difference.” Equity is ensuring individual people with differing abilities have the ability to participate equally in work; this is not the same as equality where everyone is treated the same but, instead, is the providing of additional supports to individuals who would otherwise struggle to participate at the same level as other individuals.

“Have a Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (DIEB) program run by people who volunteer to be a part of it, not pushed down from HR. Train that team on what DIEB means and how to talk to others about it. Start small with even just honouring all of the different cultural celebrations that occur in each month, not just the Christian or Canadian ones most people are used to. Talk about what those events mean, how they are celebrated, and what food people eat.”

- Kara Gillespie, Trucking Industry Executive

“Each of us has unique backgrounds, experiences, perceptions and biases (conscious and unconscious) that shape our view of the world. To increase diversity in an organization, all employees must become aware of, then acknowledge, then actively work on changing beliefs that are biased towards others.”

- Andrew Chambers, Workforce Advisor



Companies that embrace diversity see the value in different perspectives and do not see different cultures in the workplace as threatening. Embracing inclusion means not only is diversity recognised, but people are actively made to feel welcome.

The business case for prioritizing diversity and inclusion in the trucking industry is simple: making diverse people welcome within the industry increases labour availability to carriers. If barriers exist in workplaces that actively or passively prevent certain groups of people from feeling included and cared about, they are not likely to enjoy their work and may simply look elsewhere for employment.

Diversity and inclusion are also linked to psychosocial hazard control. If people do not feel welcome at their employer, are subjected to discrimination, or feel alone and disconnected from others, they will suffer psychologically¹³⁵. When reading the description for the 13 factors CSA Group and GuardingMinds@Work list as affecting psychological health and safety, it is apparent that inclusivity and the embracing of diversity are fundamental to nearly each factor¹³⁶.

If a company in any way communicates the sentiment that only certain genders, races, and cultures are allowed to fully participate and enjoy workplace activities, those excluded individuals will experience stress and dissatisfaction. Those within the company who go along with the exclusionary practices may appear to be integrated into the company's culture but may very well be acting out of fear of retribution and experiencing stress as a result of this fear.

Benefits

Embracing diversity and trying to make people feel included and valued is simply a kind approach for an organisation to take. It should be apparent that such an attitude will be of value throughout a company.



In addition, addressing acts of hateful conduct and aggression in the workplace can reduce an organisation's risk from incidents of harassment.

Challenges

Diversity and inclusion are not the focus of this document. Carriers interested in making their company culture more tolerant and inclusive may find this a challenging task. Depending on the current company culture, other issues may require attention first, like low trust, poor communication, and unconscious bias.

More Help

To learn more about diversity and inclusion, carriers can contact the CCDI¹³⁷. Their website contains resources and descriptions of their services for interested employers.

Trucking HR Canada, in partnership with AMTA, has published *Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Communities: An Employer Roadmap*¹³⁸. This resource speaks to the importance of diversity and inclusion in trucking and provides carriers with actionable steps they can take to improve their efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.



Chapter 7: When to Ask for Help

Identifying and controlling psychosocial hazards are not tasks with which a trucking company may have any experience. A carrier may not know where to start in improving psychological safety within their operations.

The best practices listed in previous sections vary in terms of how challenging they will be for a small- or medium-sized carrier to implement. Carriers are free to address psychosocial hazards on their own, but carriers need to recognise their own limitations and ask for help when they lack the competency to effectively address the issue.

There are risks in taking a do-it-yourself approach to issues related to psychological safety, especially if an incident has already occurred. An incident of workplace harassment, for example, has the potential to cause significant psychological, financial, and reputational harm to the affected person(s) and the organisation. Myths about harassment and bullying exist in workplaces that contribute to toxic cultures and poor incident response; this toxicity and poor response from employers produce examples of harassment that lead to negative consequences that are difficult to move past¹³⁹.

This doesn't mean carriers can't play an active role in their psychosocial hazard program or that the costs will be unreasonable; it just means carriers need to know when to stop and ask for help and where this help can be found. This document has provided many references to help carriers find expert help. However, knowing when to ask can be tough.

Competency and Ethical Tests

In reference to a person, Alberta's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* defines "competent" as someone who is "adequately qualified, suitably trained and with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision or with only a minimal degree of supervision"¹⁴⁰. Carriers can use this definition to decide if, amongst their staff, they



have the necessary qualifications, training, and experience in implementing a particular best practice without external help.

If it isn't clear whether they are competent to implement and manage a best practice on their own, there are several ethical tests a carrier can use to quickly decide if it is acceptable for them to proceed in any given course of action or if they need to stop and find help¹⁴¹:

1. The Legal Test:

*Is what the carrier wishes to do legal?**

* - Only a lawyer can provide legal advice.

2. The Front Page Test

If the carrier's actions were to be made public and showcased on the front page of a major newspaper, would the carrier stand behind their actions?

3. The Gut Feeling Test

Does continuing forward without external help feel like the right thing to do?

If the cost of having an expert come in and help set up a program is the only reason why a carrier is tempted to take on the project alone, it's likely external help is needed.



Guest Essay: Psychological Safety – Employer Risk

Dave Rebbitt

Psychological safety isn't really new. Workplace leadership and motivation have been a focus for decades. Leadership is being able to positively motivate people to their best performance. Even the famous Maslow talks about having safety needs met.

The recent game-changer was governments legislating harassment and bullying (workplace violence) as workplace hazards.

Psychological safety is a broad area, but the risks to employers are now greatly amplified. There are many vectors for these kinds of risks. For example, unengaged employees do not feel psychologically safe at work. They are unwilling to volunteer their opinion. They are unlikely to intervene in situations that may result in loss to the company. Loss to the company, such as loss of business, damage to equipment, or costly inefficiencies.

Disengaged employees make up most of our workforce because many don't feel psychologically safe. In a psychologically safe environment, employees are encouraged to take risks like speaking out when they see something that isn't right or to prevent something that might harm the company.

Employers can foster a psychologically safe workplace. Some think Townhall meetings are great to engage with employees. However, these public forums can be a threatening place to speak out. Employers have to emphasize a collaborative relationship with supervisors and their subordinates.

Creating psychological safety means having supervisors who are trained in their role and possess the coaching and communication skills critical to creating a psychologically safe workplace. People who perceive their supervisors and managers acting fairly and inclusively



are more likely to feel the workplace is psychologically safe. These workplaces have lower turnover and more fulfilled employees.

Psychologically unsafe workplaces are sometimes called toxic workplaces or poison work environments. These are environments where there is little accountability for managers and supervisors. They are environments where the climate is more authoritarian than it is inclusive. These are companies where decisions are made by management and supervision and imposed upon employees with little or no consultation. These are also the workplaces where harassment, bullying, and workplace violence tend to breed.

Harassment or workplace violence are acts of aggression. This is about control and not leadership or management. These acts of aggression destroy employee engagement.

It may be difficult for senior managers to spot ongoing harassment and workplace violence because it is insidious, both for victims and those who supervise personnel who may be engaging in these activities.

What is the risk? The risk is higher turnover which affects company efficiency and productivity. The risk is difficulty recruiting quality employees as company reputation is damaged. The risk is about stagnating the business and growth.

Perhaps the greatest risk is financial. There are obvious financial risks to a company related to harassment and workplace violence. Workplace violence is a term that encompasses bullying, physical violence, and even threats of violence that would include things like shouting at employees. Employees now have significant rights that they didn't have before because harassment and workplace violence is regulated as workplace hazard.

That gives employees a variety of avenues to pursue redress and compensation if they are subjected to harassment or workplace violence. Employees can simply sue the company, or take the



company to arbitration in unionized companies. Those are expensive propositions alone.

Employees also can pursue a human rights complaint if their rights were violated. People who have been harassed or subjected to workplace violence often develop psychological trauma or psychological injury. This is a protected ground under the human rights act. The employer would have to make reasonable accommodations for an employee who had suffered this kind of trauma.

Employees can also go to the health and safety regulator to exercise their right to refuse work they believe is unsafe – even psychologically unsafe. In unionized workplaces, employees can complain to the Labor Relations Board if they feel the union is not appropriately representing them.

Where employees have suffered trauma, they can file a claim with the Worker's Compensation board. Psychological injury claims have jumped a great deal in the past few years. These claims are almost always lost time, and the claim costs can easily run into the six figures.

The first step in managing risk is recognizing the hazard and determining how prevalent that hazard might be in your workplace. Mitigating that risk can be as simple as providing appropriate training - real training to managers and supervisors to understand their responsibilities and how to appropriately handle any concerns or complaints that come forward.

Managing the risk is essential. This can also be done by having appropriate procedures for handling concerns and complaints and using surveys to determine how risky your workplace is regarding workplace harassment and violence.

Communicating zero tolerance is not enough. Do employees have a safe and confidential way to come forward? Will real action be taken to protect their safety? Is the employer effectively managing the risk?



Chapter 8: A Carrier's Next Steps

In the end, addressing psychosocial hazards and improving psychological safety is about kindness. While trucking workplaces may never be completely free from stress, anger, and anxiety, carriers of all sizes can act today to improve tomorrow.

What should a carrier do next? Pick a best practice and work to implement it. Start with what looks like the simplest, easiest item from our list and work it into your safety program and operations in a systematic and documented way. The references in each best practice section will lead to more information, and AMTA can be contacted to help carriers address their own, unique needs.

There is plenty of help available to carriers to improve their workplace psychological safety. We have done the upfront research on behalf of Alberta's small- and medium-sized carriers. Now, it's up to trucking leaders, owners, safety professionals, and workers of all levels to turn this work into meaningful industry improvements. AMTA will be there for support.



External Contributor Biographies

Andrew Chambers

Andrew Chambers is a Workforce Advisor for Prospect Human Services, a charitable not-for-profit organisation that helps employers discover new pools of skilled workers in demographics they may not have considered. By raising awareness, providing training, and engaging organisations through consulting services, Prospect Human Services helps employers create their optimal workforces¹⁴².

Dave Rebbitt

Dave Rebbitt is the CEO of Rarebit Consulting, an organisation which offers consulting services throughout Canada. With over 30 years of experience in health and safety, he has managed safety departments for many large companies, building and implementing several management systems. His books, *Effective Safety Committees* (2018) and *Harassment and Workplace Violence Investigations* (2020), offer practical guidance for employers looking to improve their health and safety management systems¹⁴³.

David Henry

David Henry is a professional truck driver and a man with a mission to help others. David speaks publicly about his experiences to promote mental health improvements in the trucking industry, and he hosts a podcast, *Crazy Canuck Truckin'*¹⁴⁴.

Ellen Voie

Ellen Voie founded the Women In Trucking Association in 2007 and currently serves as the nonprofit organization's President & CEO. The Women In Trucking Association was formed to promote the employment of women in the trucking industry, to remove obstacles that might keep them from succeeding, and to celebrate the successes of its members¹⁴⁵.



Jeremy Woolward

Jeremy Woolward (he/him/his) is a fleet safety officer for Chariot Express Ltd., a small local delivery and hotshot carrier located in Calgary, Alberta. Presently, Jeremy is enrolled in the Certified Transportation Safety Professional (CTSP) program through the AMTA. He also holds a Health and Safety Administrator designation and Certificate of Recognition (COR) Peer Auditor designation with the Alberta Construction Safety Association¹⁴⁶.

Joy Martin

Joy Martin is the Transportation Compliance Coordinator for REED Energy Group Inc., an oilfield construction business with more than 60 years of oilfield experience in Western Canada¹⁴⁷.

Kara Gillespie

Kara Gillespie is a lawyer and human resources professional. She worked for Trimac as their Vice President of People & Culture, and currently works for Burnco as their Vice President of Human Resources¹⁴⁸.

Dr. Michael H. Belzer

Dr. Michael H. Belzer is Professor of Economics at Wayne State University, teaching labor economics, industrial organization, macroeconomics, and transportation economics. A short- and long-haul truck driver for ten years, Belzer has about 750,000 miles of heavy truck driving experience. He is the author of *Sweatshops on Wheels: Winners and Losers in Trucking Deregulation* (Oxford University Press: 2000) and dozens of articles, book chapters, and monographs on trucking industry and labor market issues, including many peer-reviewed articles on trucking and commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver safety and health issues¹⁴⁹.

Dr. Ronald R. Knipling

Dr. Ron Knipling is the author of *Safety for the Long Haul; Large Truck Crash Risk, Causation, & Prevention*, a comprehensive textbook on



large truck safety. In recognition of the book, he received the International Road Transport Union (IRU) Order of Merit award, the first given to an American scientist. Dr. Knipling is a traffic safety researcher, consultant, trainer, and expert witness based in the Washington, DC area¹⁵⁰.

Sadia Naqshbandi

With a background in health sciences, Sadia Naqshbandi completed her sleep training and is a registered sleep therapist. She works as a Wide Awake Workforce (WAW) Program Lead for Respiratory Homecare Solutions¹⁵¹.

Shelley Walker

Shelley Walker is the Founder and CEO of a non-profit organization, Women's Trucking Federation of Canada (WTFC). WTFC has a mission to bridge barriers, empower women, and provide a positive platform for education, mentorship, networking, and development within the trucking and transportation industry. She is a leader, spokesperson, keynote speaker, and professional driver¹⁵².

Dave Elniski (Author)

Dave Elniski (he/him/they) works for Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) as their Industry Advisor in Safety and Compliance. He works with trucking companies in Alberta to help build and improve their health and safety programs and management systems. Dave writes for AMTA on a variety of trucking-focused safety topics, and he started in the trucking industry as an over-the-road flatbed trucker¹⁵³.



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