

PERSONAL SAFETY... FOR CMV **DRIVERS**

COURSE OUTLINE

- **Personal safety starts with what you can do to take care of yourself.**
 - For starters, you need to get enough rest.
 - If you're tired, your reflexes will be slowed and your mind won't be able to make the quick decisions that you need to make as you drive.
- **Even worse, the longer that you put off sleep, the more likely you are to develop health problems, such as...**
 - Diabetes.
 - High blood pressure.
 - Stroke.
 - Heart attack.
- **So you want to be sure to follow the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) "Hours of Service Regulations".**
 - These will make sure that you're well-rested and alert while you're driving.
- **If you do feel tired or notice your vision blurring, pull over as soon as possible and rest for a while.**
- **But taking care of yourself isn't just about rest.**
 - It's about movement, too.
 - Stretching and exercising are important when you're sitting in the same position for hours at a time.
- **You should organize your schedule so that you can stop every few hours and take a break.**
 - Get out of your cab and move around.
 - Stretch out your entire body.
 - To get your blood flowing, take a brief walk.
- **While you're stopped, use the opportunity to do some limbering exercises as well.**
 - Bring your knees up to your chest or do some "pelvic tilts".
 - This can help to keep you and your back in good condition.

- **Just like your truck, your body needs the right “fuel” to “run” well.**
 - So you want to avoid junk food and sugary snacks, as well as starchy foods such as potatoes, pasta and white rice.
 - Too much coffee, soda and energy drinks aren’t good for you either.
- **Focus on food that has healthy fats and protein.**
 - Have an apple or some celery with peanut butter for a snack.
- **“Junk” food isn’t the only thing that you should avoid putting in your body.**
 - When you’re working long, sometimes physically taxing shifts, you might be tempted to turn to alcohol or drugs for a “pick me up”.
- **But driving “under the influence” puts you and other drivers in serious danger.**
 - Substance use can delay your reaction time, impair your vision, and cause you to make poor decisions.
- **So it’s important to never drink alcohol or use drugs before you drive.**
 - If you find yourself struggling with a substance use disorder, talk to your supervisor, and get information on your company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if they have one.
- **You want to make your delivery as fast as possible.**
 - But before you get on the road you need to pause and make sure you’re prepared for the journey ahead.
- **You need to verify that...**
 - You have any equipment or supplies that you’ll need.
 - You are clear about where you are going and how to get there.
 - You’re ready for any hazards you may encounter.
- **You should also make sure there is a first-aid kit on board.**
 - And have any clothes and toiletries you will need if you’ll be away overnight.
- **Pack rain or snow gear and a change of clothes if you think you might need them.**
 - A blanket can also be a good idea.

- **Check that you have adequate emergency equipment in place, including...**
 - Reflectors and road flares.
 - A flashlight.
 - A fire extinguisher.
- **You don't want to be surprised by restricted roads or bad weather.**
 - Going over your route ahead of time will help you reach your destination quickly and safely, without any hiccups.
- **Rain, snow and ice can slow you down, even send you out of control.**
 - So you'll want to know what you may be encountering and allow for conditions that can put you at risk.
 - If bad weather is forecast, you might need to leave earlier than you first planned.
- **But weather isn't the only thing that can affect your driving.**
 - No one likes getting stuck in traffic, but sometimes it's inevitable.
- **To minimize problems, check traffic patterns before you leave and plan for any potential "time lost".**
 - That way, you'll be less likely to rush and get involved in an accident.
- **A large part of your personal safety depends on how well you drive.**
 - Driving a truck requires you to be more aware than the average driver and to drive more defensively.
- **When you drive defensively, you're always "looking for trouble".**
 - Not that you want to cause any, but so you can "defend" yourself against other drivers and the situations that they can create.
- **Whether they are speeding, tailgating, or just not paying attention to what they're doing, other drivers can put you at risk.**
 - But they're not the only problem.
 - You can make decisions that put yourself at risk, too.
- **A common cause of trucking accidents is distracted driving.**
 - When you're driving for long hours, it's understandable that you might want something to help relieve the boredom.
 - But before you reach for your phone to send a text or watch a video, think about the potential effect on your personal safety.

- **When you're driving a truck, you must be alert at all times.**
 - The second you take your eyes off the road, you put yourself in danger.
- **So you need to constantly be paying attention to...**
 - The time of day (is it light or dark?).
 - Any “blind spots” associated with the truck that you're driving.
 - The other vehicles around you and the people driving them.
 - The list goes on and on.
- **Remember, most other drivers don't understand...**
 - How commercial vehicles operate.
 - What their size requires of the person who is driving them.
 - How different they are from a car to handle.
- **So, since you can't rely on other drivers to help keep you safe, you need to pay attention to the vehicles...**
 - In front of you.
 - To your sides.
 - In the back of you.
- **Watch for signals and other maneuvers.**
 - Try to anticipate what other drivers may do based on their position and actions.
 - Not everyone signals that they are going to pass.
- **Establishing a good “following distance” from the vehicles that are on the road with you is important as well.**
 - A safe distance can depend on your vehicle's size and speed, as well as the road conditions you encounter.
- **But as a general rule of thumb, you should maintain a base following distance of 5-6 seconds when you're driving a CMV.**
 - And you should add additional time if you are driving over 40mph or you run into poor road conditions.
- **For instance, when you're driving in heavy traffic, add one extra second to your six-second following distance.**
 - For night driving, when visibility is limited, or in bad weather, add three seconds.
 - Add a second or two for any other condition that you feel increases your driving risk.

- **You should also add a second when you're driving through construction and school zones.**
 - They often have a number of “obstacles” that you will need to avoid.
- **Once you know what your following distance should be, you need to know how to determine if you are maintaining that distance while you're driving.**
- **Watch the vehicle in front of you.**
 - When it passes a landmark like a tree or telephone pole, count how many seconds go by before you reach that same point.
 - If it takes you less than the number of seconds that you had calculated to get there, slow down and back off... you're too close!
- **Even the most careful truck driver can be hurt on the job.**
 - Sometimes, you aren't “combatting” road conditions or poor driving... but rather violent criminals.
- **In fact, about 40% of crimes committed against truck drivers are violent.**
 - Unfortunately robberies, assaults, and hijackings are a scary reality for truckers.
 - But there are ways you can prepare for these situations.
- **Be aware of any “high crime” areas you may go through, and avoid stopping in them.**
 - If you have to make a delivery, be on the lookout for any suspicious activity and report it immediately.
- **If you don't have them already, talk to your supervisor about installing dash cams in the front and back of your truck.**
 - Just having them can be a deterrent... and can help to identify the criminals if something does occur.
- **Sit down with your supervisor and discuss these safety issues and your company's protocols if you find yourself in distress.**
 - You may also want to set clear boundaries regarding where you are and aren't willing to travel, and during what times.
 - Remember, your own safety is your highest priority.
- **When you are on the road, be sure to keep your supervisor updated on your location.**
 - Advise them of any suspicious activity you see while you're driving.

- **You should avoid making “rest stops” at night whenever possible.**
 - If you have to, always park in well-lit areas so you can see the space around you.
 - Before you go to sleep, cover your windows with curtains or some other material so no one can see inside.
 - Loop your seatbelt through the door handle to stop someone from breaking in.
- **If you need to leave your truck, try not to walk between trailers.**
 - If you do, you will be hidden in a very narrow and dark space, making you an easy target.
 - So stay in the open as much as possible.
- **When you are walking around, wear reflective clothing.**
 - The more visible you are to others, the less likely a criminal is to approach you.
- **No matter what precautions you take to avoid emergencies, you’re never guaranteed that you won’t face one.**
 - If you are attacked or find yourself threatened, you can use a safety app to show your dispatcher or supervisor where you are.
 - When you feel unsafe, just press the “panic” button.
- **When possible, you should find a security officer.**
 - If not, call 911 and your supervisor for help.
- **In the event that a criminal approaches your truck, avoid confronting them directly.**
 - Stay inside your truck and wait for help to arrive.
- **If you are already outside of your truck or come face-to-face with a hijacker, give up your truck.**
 - Never try to save the truck or cargo yourself.
 - Your safety is more important.
- **If after you surrender your truck, a hijacker continues to threaten you, find a tool to use as a weapon.**
 - There are many things in your truck that can help you defend yourself.
 - Look for wasp spray, wire cutters, a wrench, a hammer, or any other heavy objects you can find.

- **Brandishing these can often scare a potential assailant away, or at least help you to protect yourself until help arrives.**
- **When you face an emergency, stay calm.**
 - It's easier said than done, but acting out of fear or panic can result in even more harm.
 - You need to remain focused and make logical decisions to keep yourself safe.
- **As you reach your destination, you can breathe a sigh of relief... you've made it safely!**
 - But once you arrive, there are a few last steps to take to maintain your personal safety.
- **First, find a safe place to park.**
 - You'll want to park on level ground that's close to where you'll be unloading.
 - Set and test your brakes.
 - Place chocks behind your wheels (between the tandem wheels of the trailer), so your truck won't roll.
- **Depending on the location, you may need to help with loading and unloading your cargo, if not have to do it all yourself.**
- **If you are at a loading dock, pay attention to the conditions on the dock itself, especially if it is exposed to the weather.**
 - Make sure that it isn't slippery and that any debris has been cleared off, so that you don't run the risk of slipping or tripping.
- **If you are handling individual boxes or other items, make sure that you use the proper lifting techniques.**
 - A lot of truckers come home from a trip with a back strain or a pulled muscle because they didn't.

- **To pick something up...**
 - Get as close to the object as possible.
 - Bend at the knees.
 - Keep your elbows and arms close to your body.
 - Keep your back straight.
 - Get a good grasp.
 - Bring the object into your chest.
 - Lift with your legs.
- **To put an object down, just reverse your movements.**
 - Remember to bend at the knees to get it to its resting place.
- **Many of your loads will be “palletized” and you won’t have to handle objects individually at all.**
 - Often what you’ll need to use in these cases is a pallet jack.
- **But you have to use caution with any equipment you’re using.**
 - If a pallet jack malfunctions, or you misuse it, it can result in a serious injury.
- **Check out the jack without a load first.**
 - Make sure the hydraulics are working correctly and it’s holding its position when the forks are elevated.
- **When you are ready to start moving the cargo, center the pallet jack's forks on the pallet, push it all the way in, and lift.**
 - Whenever possible, push the jack rather than pull it when you move it.
 - Pulling it increases your chances of straining your back.
- **If you’re using a forklift, it will take more room to maneuver.**
 - So make sure that you have enough clearance side to side.
 - It's easy to get "squeezed" between pallets or the sides of the truck, which can be really painful!
- **Some trucks are equipped with “liftgates”.**
 - They make loading and unloading easier when you aren’t at a loading dock.

- **When using a liftgate first inspect it to verify that it isn't damaged.**
 - It can exert a lot of force, so you want to make sure that you can control it.
 - Losing control could lead to a crushing injury.
- **Position the load as close to the center of the liftgate as possible.**
 - Too close to the outside and the load could fall off as it is being raised... taking you with it.
 - Too close to the inside and the truck body itself could knock the load off, sending the cargo back at you.
- **As you unload your truck, take your time.**
 - When you rush, you risk slipping or tripping.
 - Move slowly and be especially careful if the dock is wet or icy, or there is debris in the way.
- **When everything is unloaded, you should do a final inspection of your truck.**
 - Check the tires, steering system, and brakes.
 - This will make sure it is safe to drive when you get behind the wheel to leave.

*** * * SUMMARY * * ***

- **Be sure to regularly exercise, get enough rest, and eat right. Follow the FMCSA's "Hours of Service" Regulations to avoid fatigue.**
- **Never drive when you are "under the influence" of drugs or alcohol.**
- **Plan your route so you know exactly what to expect on the road ahead. Look for any weather warnings, restricted roads, or unusual or heavy traffic.**
- **Always be aware of your surroundings and drive defensively when you are on the road.**
- **At rest stops, avoid dimly lit areas, wear reflective clothing, and cover your windows if you will be sleeping there.**
- **If you encounter a violent criminal, try to avoid contact and call for help immediately. Never confront them.**
- **Once you arrive at your destination, do not lift heavy objects on your own, and operate any unloading equipment you use with caution.**
- **Preparing for your trips beforehand and knowing how to drive safely and what to do in emergencies are the best ways to maintain your personal safety... and will let you set out on your journey comfortable that you will return safe and sound!**