

Work ability-promoting induction training for professional drivers

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The driver's work ability truck is a good aid in the induction training of drivers for explaining the working conditions and demands that transport work places on their work ability. The aim of work ability-promoting induction training is to help drivers identify the demands and stress- and risk factors of the transport work, and to show them how they can take these into account and work in a way that promotes work ability. Maintaining work ability depends on drivers' personal choices, attitudes and relationship with their work ability. The transport company's culture, rules and good practices must also be supportive. Healthy drivers with good

work ability and who are proud of their work are successful in their jobs.

It is worth discussing the factors that affect work ability with new drivers, and reflecting together on how they can promote their own work ability. This way, drivers will have a realistic understanding of transport work from the very beginning; of the demands on their work ability and of their opportunities to influence these issues. A realistic view supports successful experiences and long working careers in the transport field.

The DRIVER'S WORK ABILITY TRUCK and topics to discuss with the new driver. How do you deal with the factors influencing work ability in your company? What are the most important issues in your company?

Demands and resources in drivers' work

WORK AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Job Content

- Driving and sometimes physically heavy loading and unloading tasks
- Customer service: difficult and threatening customers are a risk to mental and physical well-being.

Working conditions

- Long drives and shifts: shift work, early morning shifts and shifts lasting until late in the evening
- Working alone, irregularity and time pressure
- Changing seasons and traffic conditions burden the driver mentally.

Work environment

- Work environment varies greatly: from the truck cabin to traffic on the road, and different destinations
- Sedentary work and draughts can strain the neck, shoulders and back.

Work community

- Good communicative abilities are important to both the driver and the entrepreneur
- A driver's work challenges the flow of information and supervisor's work; communication is mostly by mobile phone
- Drivers meet each other at break sites, e.g. at service stations.

Reflect together on these issues

What kind of tasks does transport work involve in your company? What physically or mentally strenuous situations may the tasks present? How can you deal with these in a way that promotes work ability?

What kind of shifts do you have? Do they vary? When planning shifts it is good to listen to drivers' wishes and if possible take their life situation into account.

Do the shifts promote the work ability and alertness of the drivers? Which factors in the shifts promote coping? Consideration of individual needs supports job satisfaction and enhances the sense of meaningfulness of one's job.

In what kind of environments do your drivers work? Do occupational health professionals check drivers' seats and adjust their working postures? What kind of advice do occupational health professionals give drivers on work postures? What kind of work methods and tools are good to use?

What kind of work community do you have? Are your closest workmates from the same company or are they from a different company? What do you have to take into account if your workmates are from different companies? How often do drivers have the opportunity to talk face to face with their supervisors? How do you communicate with a supervisor who is in a different place?



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Demands and resources in drivers' work

HEALTH

- Good health, alertness and coping at work are essential for work ability
- Healthy eating and drinking habits as well as weight control promote alertness, work ability and health
- Sleep: night work and long distance driving in particular require good health and alertness
- Fitness for work: good physical fitness, alertness and the ability to react quickly and proactively
- Good vision and hearing. Eyesight is strained in difficult weather conditions and when driving in the dark.

COMPETENCE

- Professional competence can be developed through training
- Drivers have to manage vehicles and practice road safety
- It is essential to understand the operations of the logistic chain, remember different paragraphs of the law and to apply them
- Drivers are responsible for cargo, expensive vehicles, road safety and human lives
- Drivers must ensure that their vehicles are in good condition, change spare parts and repair faults
- Customers' demands must be taken into account
- Social skills, human relations skills, customer service orientation and assertiveness are all important.

MOTIVATION

- A professional expert is proud of his competence and his own role as a professional
- Values and attitudes are a driver's strengths
- A driver who is fit for work and is proud of his job is a credit to the company, and it is worth investing in him
- Trust and responsibility are important for the driver as well as the employer
- One's own role in providing customer service and attitude to customers is significant
- Autonomy, desire for freedom, people-orientation and good customer service are important sources of motivation for many drivers.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY'S INFLUENCE ON TRANSPORT WORK

- Technical progress of vehicles and devices
- Competition in the transport sector and tight timetables
- Changes in legislation
- Stricter health requirements of drivers.

FAMILY AND THE CLOSE COMMUNITY

- The work/family balance is important for work ability
- Work is irregular and includes night work
- Drivers' close social environment has great significance for their well-being.

More information

More information regarding work ability, see www.ttl.fi/en/health/wai/multidimensional_work_ability_model

Knowledge and tips: www.ttl.fi/en/research/research_projects/alert_behind_the_wheel

Induction training criteria have been gathered from the transport companies, entrepreneurs and professional drivers of the "Young Driver Can!" project.

Reflect together on these issues

Does your company support and encourage a healthy lifestyle? How? How are occupational health services organized in your company?

You can promote health and work ability at workplaces in many ways. For examples, see www.ttl.fi/en/research/research_projects/alert_behind_the_wheel

A healthy lifestyle is especially important for drivers. It is essential to take care of health and work ability in ways that they can influence themselves.

How is professional competence training organized in your company and who pays for it?

How do you ensure drivers' competence levels? What about the level of safety competence? What kind of competence is needed in your company?

Professional competence training, the technical development of vehicles and devices, and tough competition in the transport sector all place their own demands on drivers' competence.

What factors motivate your drivers? What about you? What are the important values in your job?

In order to be motivated and experience job satisfaction, newcomers need positive experiences at the beginning of their careers and time to develop in a safe atmosphere. Because drivers are alone on the road for long periods, it is important that a new driver can contact either their supervisor or an experienced co-worker when needed. Who in your company supports the newcomer?

How do you take into account changes in the external environment? Do you inform drivers of them? Are you proactive and do you try to influence the surrounding community by participation?

What do you do so that family and close ones encourage and support you in the demands of a driver's job? Do you talk about family issues at work? Are family and work flexible? It is important that driver's close relationships, family and friends know the demands of the transport sector and that they accept that the driver has to be away from home for long periods.

YOUNG DRIVER CAN!

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