

TIRES

Helping to Reduce Work Related Injuries in the Commercial Trucking Industries

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The Washington State trucking industry has some of the highest costs and rates for work-related injuries. Until recently, very little was being done to address injuries other than those caused by motor vehicle collisions. Something needed to be done to help this valuable industry, so the Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) program of the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries resolved to take on the challenge. Hence, TIRES was born.

The goal of the Trucking Injury Reduction Emphasis (TIRES) project is

to reduce injuries and fatalities to trucking industry workers by examining the root causes of the most common injuries in the industry.

What is meant by root cause? It's the very last "why" that determines why something happened.

For example: A driver gets out of his cab, trips in a pothole and falls. There may be a lot of contributing factors to the fall, such as he didn't check the ground before exiting or his hands were full and obstructed his view. Was the lighting in the yard adequate and was the yard properly maintained to eliminate trip hazards like potholes? Was there a history of other workers who had tripped in or seen the pothole previously, but didn't report it for maintenance? Was the hazard reported, but not followed up on? Is there a process to report issues in the yard? Does the company have a budget to maintain the yard or are hazards ignored for financial reasons?

In this example, the root cause might be a lack of maintenance budget so that even if there is a reporting system in place and the hazard was reported, nothing could have been done to fix it. Consequently, this is where the focus of fixing the problem needs to be targeted. Otherwise, injuries will continue to happen to valued workers. Although addressing each link in the injury chain may be helpful, until the last "why" is addressed, the hazard will never truly be eliminated.

This is where TIRES attempts to fill the gap. By interviewing injured workers, trucking company owners and trucking industry stakeholders, we develop training and safety solutions for

companies to use to keep workers safe and injury-free.

So what have we found? Although motor vehicle collisions can be catastrophic, the most expensive and common injuries occur to the muscles, tendons and joints of industry workers over time. Traumatic injuries caused by falls or being struck by objects are also common causes of injuries. Four work activities found to be the riskiest are:

1. Loading and unloading activities, including manual handling
2. Securing the load
3. Entering and exiting the cab
4. Walking around the job site

So we know the tasks that injure workers, but determining the root cause of these injuries to develop useful safety practices to implement during these job activities is the continuing mission of TIRES.

We can't do it alone, so we enlisted the help of experts to develop injury prevention products. The amazing TIRES steering committee is made up of industry professionals including associations such as the Washington Trucking Associations, the Washington Refuse & Recycling Association and the SMART Association. We also have Teamsters Local 252 and Teamsters Training and safety professionals from some of the most safety-conscious trucking companies in the state. They guide and critique our work and provide a much-needed industry perspective.

From this partnership, TIRES develops cutting-edge safety training materials that are free to all. Initially,

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these publications were mailed only to Washington trucking companies and published on the web at www.KeepTruckingSafe.org. Thanks to social media, the impact of TIRES has spread well beyond the borders of Washington, reaching all over the nation and into Canada and Australia. Social media, including the TIRES blog at www.Lni.wa.gov, YouTube at <http://youtu.be/vEIXIrU3Jew> and the twitter account @TruckSafe, have pushed the safety culture conversation out into the world.

TIRES turned a corner with the production of safety training simulations specific to the trucking industry. Topics to date include:

- Jumping vs. 3 points of contact: www.KeepTruckingSafe.org/game.html

- Preventing slips and falls by choosing the proper footwear: www.KeepTruckingSafe.org/game_2.html
- Tarping the load: www.KeepTruckingSafe.org/game_3_tarping.html
- Lever vs. ratchet binders: www.KeepTruckingSafe.org/game_4_binders.html
- Tire chaining: www.KeepTruckingSafe.org/simulation/simulation_tire_changing.html

For easiest access to these simulations, just see the left hand column of the www.KeepTruckingSafe.org main page.

New materials are released monthly by signing up to receive the TIRES

E-news at: www.Lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/Trucking/SignUp/Default.asp.

We are not finished yet; we still need your input and ideas. We love to get suggestions for topics or tips from our stakeholders. Please contact us with your ideas. What have you found that works? What doesn't work? Have you noticed any trends in the injuries at your company? What have you done to address them? Do you want input from the industry on how others have dealt with similar situations?

Keep the conversation going by commenting in the avenues listed here or by emailing us directly at TIRES@Lni.wa.gov. ■

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