



TRUCKER

2024 | VOLUME 16 ISSUE 2

Focus

YOUR GUIDE TO TRIP PLANNING

10 TIPS TO PLAN FOR PROBLEMS

Planning a trip as a truck driver involves more than just knowing your destination. Successful trip planning requires anticipating potential problems and having strategies in place to address them. Here are some essential tips to help you navigate your routes smoothly and handle any issues that may arise along the way.

1. Pre-Trip Inspection

Before hitting the road, conduct a thorough pre-trip inspection of your truck. Check the engine, brakes, tires, lights, and all essential systems to ensure they are in good working condition. Regular maintenance can prevent many breakdowns and keep you safe on the road.

2. Know Your Route

Familiarize yourself with the route before you start your trip. Use GPS and mapping tools to plan your journey, but also keep a physical map as a backup. Identify rest stops, fueling stations, and weigh stations along the way. Knowing your route helps avoid unexpected detours and ensures you stay on schedule.

3. Monitor Weather Conditions

Weather can significantly impact your trip. Check the weather forecast for your entire route before departure and monitor it during the trip. Be prepared for adverse conditions such as heavy rain, snow, or fog. Have a plan for safe places to stop if the weather becomes too hazardous.

4. Plan for Delays

Traffic congestion, road construction, and accidents can cause delays. Build extra time into your schedule to account for these potential issues. Use real-time traffic apps to stay updated on current road conditions and find alternative routes when necessary.

5. Emergency Kit Essentials

Always carry an emergency kit with basic tools, spare parts, first-aid supplies, food, water, and extra clothing. These essentials can save the day if mechanical problems or other emergencies arise.

6. Communication Is Key

Stay in touch with your dispatcher and other drivers. Share your location and status regularly, especially if you face delays or issues. Effective communication ensures help can reach you quickly and keeps everyone informed about your progress.



7. Compliance and Documentation

Ensure everything is in order before you start your trip. This includes permits, licenses, logs, and delivery documents. Staying compliant with regulations prevents legal problems and fines or delays at weigh stations and inspection points.

8. Health and Well-Being

Long hours on the road can take a toll on your health. Plan regular breaks to rest and stretch. Stay hydrated, eat nutritious meals, and get enough sleep. Your well-being is crucial for safe driving and effective problem-solving.

9. Stay Informed

Stay updated on industry news and regulation changes. Joining trucking forums or networks can provide valuable insights and tips from other experienced drivers.

10. Review and Reflect

After each trip, review what went well and what could be better. This will help you improve at anticipating and handling problems on future trips.

Effective trip planning involves preparation, vigilance, and flexibility. By anticipating potential problems and having strategies to address them, you can ensure a smoother, safer, and more efficient journey. Happy trucking and safe travels!



Motor Carrier TOOLBOX

This form is an example only. Questionnaires may look different, but should include, at minimum, the two questions below.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT DRUG AND ALCOHOL QUESTIONNAIRE

Applicant Name _____

Yes No

Within the last two (2) years, have you ever tested positive, or refused to test, on any pre-employment drug or alcohol test administered by an employer to which you applied for, but did not obtain, safety-sensitive transportation work?

If yes, have you successfully completed the return-to-duty process?

Acuity's Motor Carrier Toolbox serves as a one-stop shop for resources that help trucking businesses become more compliant and run more efficiently. It includes a wealth of information and provides access to tools, programs, and policies designed to help motor carriers comply with CSA and other FMCSA/ DOT regulations.

Check out this handy Pre-Employment Drug & Alcohol Questionnaire you can download and print. It's available without a sign-in at www.acuity.com/mctb.

ASK THE CONSULTANT

*Cliff Johnson
is Acuity's Trucking
Consultant. Have a
question for Cliff?
Reach him at
cliff@acuity.com.*



Ask Cliff

What are some of the underrated—and enjoyable—benefits of being a truck driver?

In the 38 years since I first sat behind the wheel of my old IH 4070A, I trucked in 44 of the lower 48 states and Canada. During college, I drove the Midwest on weekends and long-haul during the summer breaks. I experienced my share of challenges and annoyances as a driver and fleet owner, but overall, trucking has treated me very well. There are so many underrated benefits that drivers can experience. I will share a few thoughts with you here.

Truck drivers can travel to different places and experience the country firsthand, from east to west and from the rugged to the refined. I still remember one of my first trips to the southwest as a young man, experiencing the feeling of the sharper-bladed grass on my feet in contrast to the turf in my home state of Wisconsin.

Overall, the sense of freedom that comes with driving on open highways and seeing diverse landscapes can be incredibly rewarding and educational. As a truck driver, you also typically have a high level of independence in managing your schedule and determining the best routes to arrive at your destination. The autonomy to make

decisions about when and where to take breaks, how to plan trips, and how to navigate the roads can be empowering and liberating.

The open road often brings new sights, sounds, and experiences and provides variety not seen in many traditional office or line jobs. Also, Uber and Lyft make it easy to visit locations you normally could not while trucking on the open road.

One of the greatest things I enjoy is planning a load and taking my 34-hour reset as a tourist. I have visited the caves in Kentucky, rented a Harley during Sturgis, snowmobiled in Yellowstone, and toured some of our nation's greatest sites—and I first discovered many of these as a truck driver. Of course, over the years, this took careful planning as the truck, cargo, fleet, and customer are always the top priority. But you can expand your experience on the open road with proper time and planning.

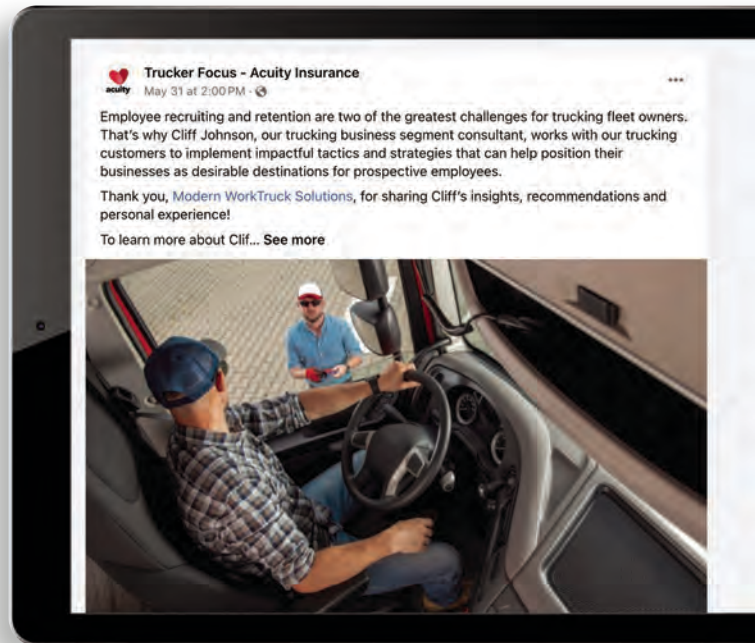
What have been some of your greatest experiences on the open road? Drop me a line and share your stories.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

 facebook.com/acuitytrucking

Driver hiring and retention are two of the greatest challenges for trucking fleet owners—how are you addressing these in your business? Share your thoughts and join in the conversation on our Trucker Focus Facebook page at: facebook.com/acuitytrucking.



WIN \$100!

FIND THE FLAGPOLE TO BE ENTERED!



Acuity is proud to hoist a 70- by 140-foot American flag on a 400-foot flagpole at our headquarters in Sheboygan, WI. Visit www.acuity.com/flag to learn more.

To enter, find the flagpole hidden in this issue and send an email with the location to flagcontest@acuity.com. We'll randomly choose a winner from the correct entries received by August 31, 2024.

WINNER

of last issue's contest was:

Melissa Siddoway

The Buckner Company Inc.
Idaho Falls, ID

This contest is not open to employees of Acuity or their immediate family members. For a complete list of rules, visit www.acuity.com/flagcontestrules.

DRUG & ALCOHOL CLEARINGHOUSE

– UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS –

Are you an owner/operator, or do you employ truck drivers with a commercial driver's license (CDL)? If so, your fleet is likely required to complete drug and alcohol testing of your drivers before putting them behind the wheel of a commercial motor vehicle.

Not all employers are aware of or comfortable with the FMCSA Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse requirements. The Clearinghouse is an online database established by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). It serves as a central repository for records of drug and alcohol violations by CDL holders. Key components of the process include:

- *The first step an employer must complete is the registration. You can find detailed information and a guidance video at clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov. Also, medical review officers, substance abuse professionals, and other authorized users must register with the Clearinghouse to access its services.*
- *Once the registration process is complete, the second step is for employers to report violations of drug and alcohol violations by CDL drivers to the Clearinghouse. These violations include positive drug test results, refusals to test, and alcohol test results indicating a blood alcohol concentration of 0.04 or higher while on duty.*
- *Before hiring CDL drivers, employers must conduct pre-employment queries to determine if they have any prohibited drug or alcohol violations in the Clearinghouse. Fleets must also conduct annual queries on all current CDL drivers to check for new violations. CDL drivers must provide consent for these queries.*

- *CDL drivers receive notification if any drug or alcohol violations are reported to the Clearinghouse by their current or prospective employers. Drivers can review the information in the Clearinghouse and take necessary steps to address the violations.*

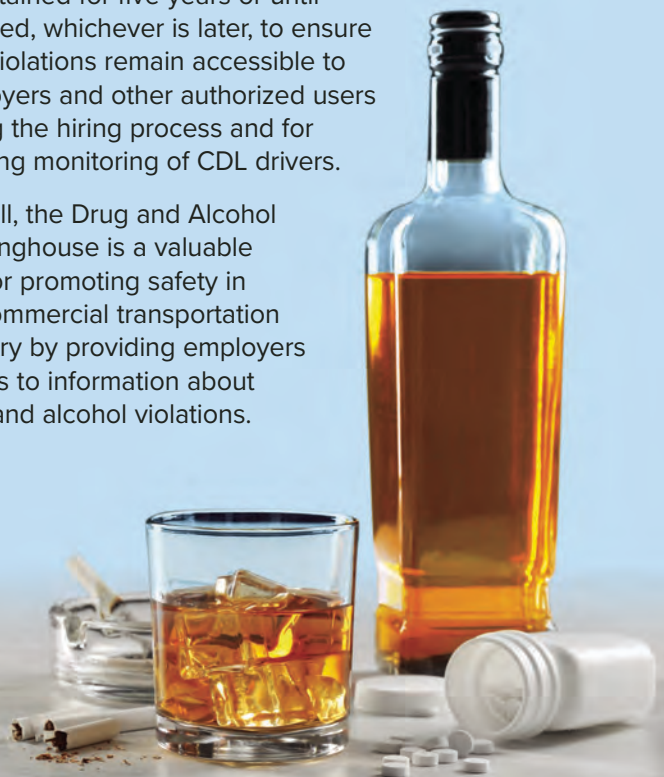
Not all violations involve illegal substances: many over-the-counter drugs can have a positive test outcome. When a CDL driver receives a prescription, they should ask their doctor about potential issues.

If a CDL driver has violated drug and alcohol regulations, a return-to-duty process is available to get them working again. That typically involves evaluation by a substance abuse professional, completion of a treatment program, and passing a return-to-duty drug or alcohol test. The successful completion of the return-to-duty process is reported to the Clearinghouse.

Like other FMCSA regulatory programs, drug and alcohol violations in the Clearinghouse are retained for five years or until resolved, whichever is later, to ensure past violations remain accessible to employers and other authorized users during the hiring process and for ongoing monitoring of CDL drivers.

Overall, the Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse is a valuable tool for promoting safety in the commercial transportation industry by providing employers access to information about drug and alcohol violations.

Visit: clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov for more info.



BEST OF THE BLOG



REDUCE THE DANGERS OF DISTRACTED DRIVING!

In today's fast-paced world, multitasking has become second nature for many, allowing us to juggle multiple tasks simultaneously and get more done in less time. However, there's one place where multitasking can have deadly consequences: behind the wheel.

The FMCSA banned texting using handheld devices to reduce serious accidents and fatalities. However, drivers face many other distractions, including common activities like adjusting a radio, eating, drinking, using maps and navigation devices, and searching for an item in the cab.

Here are six important steps trucking company owners can take to help drivers operate safely and distraction-free.

- 1. Create a distracted driving policy** for all employees that requires drivers to focus only on driving tasks while operating a vehicle. The policy should indicate that activities like texting, using handheld cell phones, and similar distractions are prohibited while driving, and failure to comply with the rule will result in disciplinary action.
- 2. Educate and train all employees** affected by the policy and provide written copies during training conducted at new hire orientation, driver meetings, and one-on-one coaching. Send additional periodic reminders via paycheck stuffers or by leaving information in cabs.
- 3. Enforce the policy!** Involve drivers by asking them to become ambassadors representing your fleet while on the road. Expecting employees to follow regulations and help get people home to their families at night is reasonable. Demonstrate that you are willing to audit and enforce the policy. The old saying "trust but verify" is essential for changing driver behavior.
- 4. Use technology** to help with compliance and enforcement. Consider locking your fleet onboard communication systems when a vehicle is in motion. Most systems offer this option.
- 5. Do not allow one-touch, hands-free, or voice-activated systems.** Even if allowed per regulation, it is safer to prohibit using communication technology while driving.
- 6. Be willing to terminate unsafe drivers.** To protect your drivers and your business, you must be willing to use a progressive disciplinary policy and terminate drivers who operate outside regulations and your company's policies.

Distracted driving policies can provide a significant return on investment, helping to avoid accident-related costs like vehicle damage, public liability, customers not being served, driver turnover, and more.



Acuity Knows Trucking!

Check out our dedicated trucking-focused online channels!



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acuity.com/trucking



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acuity.com/trucker-focus



YouTube
youtube.com/acuityinsurance
(Trucker Focus playlist)



LinkedIn
linkedin.com/company/acuity-insurance



Twitter
twitter.com/acuityinsurance

TRUCKING QUESTIONS?

Acuity's on-site trucking consultant provides over 30 years of industry experience to your business.



Email

trucking.news@acuity.com



Phone

800.242.7666, extension 1740





GET HELP WITH HEAVY OR AWKWARD LOADS

TRUCKER TALK AHEAD ↗

KEEP YOURSELF FROM BECOMING AN INJURY STATISTIC

- Get help from a coworker or customer if an object weighs more than 50 pounds and mechanical aids are not available.
- Don't risk an injury by using damaged equipment. Report any needed maintenance.
- Plan ahead when moving anything heavy or awkward. Work with customers, dispatchers, loaders, and sales staff to make sure loads are oriented properly and safe unloading is possible.

HAZARD



Lifting heavy or awkward loads causes many of the strain and sprain injuries in the trucking industry.

SOLUTION



Get help lifting awkward or heavy loads.



focused on truckers

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