



## HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER

April 2015

Welcome to the April edition of the Health and Safety Newsletter! Spring has sprung everywhere and we hope everyone is enjoying the improved weather and driving conditions. This month we introduce your newly elected Health and Safety Committee, we touch base on one of the topics from the Driver Resources Department's new Spring Awareness Campaign (which really applies to all of us, not just our professional drivers), and for our long haul driving fleet we highlight 5 easy habits that can go a long way towards a healthier lifestyle. Plus, we offer up another great recipe. Have a great month everyone!

### NEW HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

After the completion of a three-year term, elections were held for your new Health and Safety Committee. We saw some awesome campaigning and great voter turnout, which produced the following results:

Chairperson – Vereena Fraser

Vice-Chair (Building) – Sabrina Dalglish (Kelowna)

Vice-Chair (Yard) – Sheldon Baron

Building Committee Member – Audrey Jansen, Erik Hobbs, Ray Brown (Calgary)

Yard Committee Member – Wayne Balfour, Brian Hopfner, Terry Allin

Big Rig Representative – Josh Spruit

Also a part of the committee in appointed roles are Paul Bain (Advisor) and Carlos Navarrete (past Chairperson).

The new committee is super excited and full of new energy and ideas. We look forward to carrying on and enhancing the past committee's initiatives and introducing new ones that will benefit all staff members. A special thank you goes to the past committee members for all their hard work these past 3 years. As always, the Health and Safety Committee can be reached in person, over the phone, or via email at [healthandsafety@vtlg.com](mailto:healthandsafety@vtlg.com).

### DEFENSIVE DRIVING: LANE CHANGE TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Of all the driving mistakes committed on our roads, incorrect signaling and changing lanes incorrectly are one of the most common. If you ask drivers what they most dislike about other drivers, nine times out of ten you would hear the response "drivers not changing lanes properly". Making mistakes when changing lanes and signaling can often result in serious or even fatal injury. For people serious about learning defensive driving, lane change techniques are a vital skill to learn.

#### Signaling – Get Into Good Habits

It is not always a legal requirement to signal when driving. In some states, you are only required to signal if your change in movement is likely to affect drivers around you. For example, when driving down a deserted freeway at 4.00 am with no other drivers for miles, it may not be necessary for you to signal a turn. Having said that, it is wise to "always" signal turns and lane changes. From a defensive driving standpoint, if you signal on every occasion, no matter what the circumstances, you create a habit which kicks in on autopilot, helping to keep you safe and accident-free.





The important point about signaling is to ensure you are sending clear information. Take care to signal at just the right moment. Signaling too soon or too late causes other drivers confusion about your intentions. For example, oncoming drivers can interpret your signal to mean you want to turn later or sooner than you really intend.

Some drivers deliberately do not use turn signals, believing that by forecasting a lane change other drivers will counter their move by closing their "gap" in the lane. Although this does happen, fortunately it only occurs in the minority of cases. Most drivers WILL make a space for you if they know you want to switch lanes.

### **Defensive Driving Lane Changing Techniques**

Learn and developing these defensive driving skills for correctly changing lanes will go a long way towards ensuring you remain safe and accident-free on the roads.

**Scan the road ahead and plan in advance.** Before changing lanes, scanning the road ahead and checking what other drivers are doing is vitally important. Things to watch out for include pedestrians about to step on to the road, other vehicles reducing speed, and drivers about to merge across your lane. Keeping an eye on the brake lights of vehicles in front of you is also a good indicator of trouble ahead. Cars beginning to slow down will usually hit their brakes giving a vital warning to alert drivers behind.

**Monitor the rear vision mirror.** The rearview mirror gives a much wider view than the one provided by your side mirrors. The rearview mirror should be checked with a quick glance, simultaneously keeping your main focus on the road ahead. Things to watch out for when glancing in your rearview mirror include traffic coming up faster than you are driving. Also keep your eyes peeled for vehicles signaling to change lanes behind you who might be increasing speed to pass your vehicle.

**Always signal your intentions.** Communicating with other drivers is the most important part of defensive driving. Signaling is done to communicate to other drivers what you are about to do. By signaling to other drivers, you give them the chance to slow down and allow your lane change to be made safely. For example, drivers in front of you who are planning a maneuver may stay put if they see your signal. It is always wise to remember that people often make unexpected moves. Don't take anything for granted and get into the habit of anticipating the worst!

**Don't forget your blind spot.** Turn your head and take a quick glance over your shoulder to ensure there is no other driver in the lane beside you. If you do see a vehicle there, stay in your own lane until the vehicle has gone past.

**Recheck ahead....(again) before changing lanes.** Immediately before turning the steering wheel to navigate your lane change, check once again to make no driver is slowing down or straying into your path. Move gradually into your lane change with only a slight adjustment of the steering wheel. If it is not possible to change lanes when you check the blind spot, cancel the maneuver and prepare to begin all over again.

**Don't change lanes at intersections.** Make sure you plan your lane changes either before and after intersections where side roads, streets or crossroads meet the road you are using.

When it comes to defensive driving, lane change techniques and signaling correctly are important skills to learn and





implement into your daily driving. Make sure these are skills YOU learn and become familiar with; your life may depend on it!

### 5 HEALTHY HABITS FOR OVER-THE-ROAD-TRUCK DRIVERS

Over-the-road (OTR) truckers have the propensity to lead one of the unhealthiest lifestyles in today's working class. The very nature of the work is sedentary. The work in and of itself is somewhat monotonous. Speaking from personal experience, it is easy to eat when one is bored.

One of the things you encounter is truck stops. They are an ideal location for a truck driver. In one stop, you can fuel, shower, eat and possibly even have your truck worked on (maintenance wise). Therefore, if all those things are in one place, you save time by stopping there instead of several places. However, if you could add one more stop to your list that could save you weight and provide you real nutrition, and then perhaps you can work it in.

#### 1. Eating Healthy on the Go

Most grocery stores in my experience have sufficient parking for tractor-trailers, although you may have to walk an extra bit. Moreover, since we live in an ever more convenience-filled world, they are a wealth of easy to eat nutritious food. Here are a few items that you can choose:

- Pre-washed bags of lettuce and spinach
- Pre-washed and cut vegetables (to eat alone or put on your lettuce)
- Pre-washed and cut fruit
- Whole pieces of fruit that are easy to clean (apples, oranges, plums, bananas)
- Grilling meat (especially chicken and turkey breasts)

Now for the grilling meat you would need to have a portable grill, fortunately those are easily accessible at most large department stores and large chain grocery stores.

#### 2. Exercise

Exercise is hard when you are an OTR driver. You drive for 11 hours straight (at least that is all you are supposed to do) then take 10 hours off (and I hope you do take that long off) and then you are back at it again, repeating the cycle. When you push that hard, where do you fit in exercise? Here are some suggestions you might consider:

**Folding bicycles** can be stowed in the sleeper berth compartment and then tossed up in the passenger seat when it is time to go to bed. While parked at a truck stop you can ride around the outer edges of the parking lot (to avoid traffic). Alternatively, if you are at a rest area, you can ride around there too. Some have little trails you can follow.

**Running shoes** are an inexpensive option and very easy to store. You can go walking or jogging in the same places you would ride a bicycle.





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**Weights** can be just as effective, although you want to be careful in your selections. Choose weights that you could quite possibly use while driving down the road. Words of caution though, make sure you have a good place to secure them. You do not want them to roll under your acceleration pedal, brake or clutch. That could be deadly.

**Pedometers** can be used in conjunction with the bicycle or running shoes allowing you to track your progress. Tracking your progress is a fantastic motivator.

### 3. Sleep

Sleep is essential to good health. You live in the cab of your truck. Do not settle for the cheapest when it comes to a mattress and pillow.

Further, make sure you have a portable fan and heater. If your truck breaks down and you are going to sleep while you wait for the repair, then you will need something portable to keep you warm or cool, as the need may be.

In addition, a white noise machine can be useful to block out extraneous noises.

You need to get as much sleep as possible in your 10 hours off and to do that your sleeping conditions must be as comfortable and as quiet as possible.

### 4. Mind

The job can be boring. Mile after mile after mile of monotonous roads, trees and signs. You can easily become distracted or you can think too much. Do you know that sometimes thinking too much is a bad thing? Dwelling on a matter too long can distort your thinking and even cause you to become enraged. Distraction and being angry are both bad for driving. They take away from your primary task, driving.

So this begs the question, how to you overcome the monotony? Here are a few suggestions:

- **Audio books.** Purchase or rent audio books and listen to your favorite authors or develop favorite authors. Use the opportunity to learn about subjects that fascinate you.
- **Language tapes.** You do not have to have the goal of becoming fluent in another language, but you can learn some phrases. This is especially useful if you deal with a number of individuals who speak a different language. Learn a few of things to say in their language. The amount of respect you will earn will be insurmountable.
- **Music.** Branch out in your taste of music. Do you listen to country music? Try listening to Bach or Tchaikovsky. Is rap music your taste? Try listening to world music. Your options are numerous.



### 5. Family

OTR work does not always lend to a healthy family life. It is so easy to come home after weeks on the road and either vegetate or be so involved with household chores that you could neglect your family. One way to connect with your family while home is share stories of your travels. Can you take pictures while on the road (while you are safely stopped of course) and share them with your kids? Here are some activities to help bond with your family while home:

Tell your children in advance where you will be driving (through and to). Have them look up the history of a couple of places. Then you can take pictures of those areas you have them doing research on. When you return home, set aside time, at least an hour, and have the children tell you all they learned and then you in turn, share the pictures you took. It will be a learning experience for them, and you can bond while you do it.

Get an audio book for yourself and the same paper book for your wife (of course, something that interests you both). When you talk together (over the phone and/or when you are home), you can share what you liked most about the book. You might find you have even more in common than you ever realized.

### Slow Cooker Recipe for Truck Drivers – Sweet Potato Kale Stew



This truck driver recipe, courtesy of Forks Over Knives, is adapted to a slow cooker. This could be the first time you're cooking in orange juice! The ingredients can vary in quantity based on what you like and don't like. Here's what you need for this easy slow cooker recipe...



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### Ingredients:

- 2 large sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 1 can of low-sodium red kidney beans
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp chipotle sauce
- 2 cups kale, shredded
- 2 cups orange juice

Directions: Put all ingredients in the slow cooker except for the kale. Cook on low for 12 hours. In the last 20 minutes, add the kale.

