

Keep on Truckin'

Adequate Sleep and Truck Driver Safety

In 1973, Eddie Kendricks, co-founder of the Temptations, recorded a song entitled *Keep on Truckin'*. Although the song's meaning "not giving up" and "to keep going" did not necessarily pertain to the trucking industry, the song's true definition could certainly be perceived as an indirect reflection of today's truckers, as they keep going to provide goods and services within their local communities, across state lines, around the country and ultimately, the world.

Let's face it, truckers are essential to the world's supply chain and distribution of goods. As such, the overall health of a truck driver is essential to timely receipt of those everyday items whose delivery we all take for granted. We don't always stop to think about how those precious items reach our front doors, appear on the shelves of our local grocer, our favorite shopping and dining spots, that basically influences every aspect of our lives!! Imagine your child's birthday gift arriving a day late, or your daily meds being delayed due to a driver's untimely medical absence. A trucker's overall health and wellness is critical to the driver, and to us all.

One important need of life that impacts many areas of a truck driver's overall health is sleep. Lack of sleep and/or sleep dysfunction can greatly affect a driver's health and wellbeing. A truck driver needs quality and the proper amount of sleep to refuel and keep their physical engines running efficiently, just like the trucks they operate.

According to the CDC, 1 in 25 adult drivers (18 years or older) reported dozing off behind the wheel in the previous 30 days.¹ Adults who snore or get 6 hours of sleep or fewer a day, were more likely to fall asleep while driving than those who do not snore, or those who usually get 7 hours of sleep or more.¹ According to a NHTSA report from 2020, there were 633 deaths associated with drowsy driving.²

Your Snore Could Mean Something More

Don't shrug it off...snoring may be a sign of sleep apnea, especially if you feel tired during the day, despite getting a full night's sleep. Sleep apnea occurs when breathing temporarily slows, is restricted, or even stops during sleep. The most common type, known as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), occurs when the muscles at the back of the throat relax and block the airway. This may be a contributing factor for some loud snoring.

It can be hard to determine whether you have sleep apnea, since it occurs while you are sleeping. However, you can ask a partner or record yourself while sleeping. Pay attention to any pauses in your breath, choking or gasping for air. If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your physician immediately.

There are many risk factors for sleep apnea, including some which we do not have control over, such as family history, a narrow airway, chronic nasal congestion, being older or being male. However, there are other risk factors that we may be able to control, including alcohol consumption, smoking and excess weight.*

Working the Night Shift

Getting 7-9 hours of sleep each night is important for your health and can affect your mood and ability to concentrate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 16% of full-time U.S. employees work non-daytime hours (6pm-7am) and are at a higher risk of sleep problems. If you work non-daytime hours, you may be working during times when your body is used to being asleep and sleeping when your

body is ready to be awake. Arriving to your job well-rested and alert is important for helping you avoid injury and perform your job correctly. Talk with your loved ones about your need for rest and setting up a good rest period before the start of your work week. The day before your work week starts is one of the most critical for setting yourself up for success.

When you have difficulty adjusting to new or rotating shifts at work, it may lead to “shift work disorder,” which stems from interruptions in your circadian rhythm (or “internal clock”). If, after several weeks of working a new shift, you find that you are still feeling tired after 7-8 hours of sleep, or having difficulty falling asleep or staying awake, you may have shift work disorder. If you’re having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor about it. Difficulty sleeping or not achieving restful sleep could be a sign of a medical condition or specific sleep disorder.

Creating Good Habits for Better Sleep

Here are some tips to consider for getting enough sleep:

1. **Determine your sleep schedule.** There are a couple of good options for getting enough sleep:
 - a. Stay up for a few hours after getting home from work; then start your sleep so that you’ll have 7-9 hours before you need to get up to start your shift.
 - b. Take a nap when you arrive home from work, then take another or longer nap later on, after you’ve been awake for a while.
 - c. The important thing is to sleep close to when you are needing to get up and go into work to keep a consistent sleep schedule.
2. **Make sure others in your household** are aware of your schedule so they can support you with the right environment and help you experience fewer disruptions to your sleep.
3. **Create a sleep-friendly environment.**
 - a. Consider using blackout curtains to keep the sunlight out of your room.
 - b. Try wearing an eye mask.
 - c. Avoid screen time at least 30 minutes before bed.
 - d. Keep the temperature in your bedroom between 60° and 67° F.
4. **Be conscious of your caffeine intake**, especially if you are sensitive to it. It may be best to avoid caffeine up to at least four hours before your bedtime.
5. **Although alcohol may help you fall asleep more quickly, it may disrupt your sleep cycles.** Therefore, to help achieve optimal sleep, it is recommended that you avoid alcohol altogether.

Other important elements to keep in mind that can potentially help you get into good, healthy habits and assist in getting enough sleep include...incorporating physical activity in your daily routine, managing your stress, and creating a bedtime routine such as reading a relaxing book, listening to calm music, or taking a warm bath.

By now we’ve established that truck drivers are essential in the distribution of goods and services around the world. With varied shifts, demanding work conditions, and at times uncommon work hours, helping our drivers get into good sleeping habits should be a priority, as it is critical to their overall well-being and the well-being of our supply chain. This helps us all to live a better life and ‘Keep on Truckin’.

1. [*****.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/drowsydriving_strategicplan_030316.pdf](https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/drowsydriving_strategicplan_030316.pdf)
2. [*****crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813266](https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813266)

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[*****.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-apnea/symptoms-causes/syc-20377631](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-apnea/symptoms-causes/syc-20377631).

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U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 7. Workers by shift usually worked and selected characteristics, averages for the period 2017-2018.

[*****.bls.gov/news.release/flex2.t07.htm](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/flex2.t07.htm). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). How Much Sleep Do I Need?

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[*****.sleepfoundation.org/articles/shift-work-and-sleep](https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/shift-work-and-sleep). Sleep Foundation. Tips for Sleeping During the Day.

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** Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as 1 drink or less per day for women and 2 drinks or less per day for men. Talk with your physician if you have questions about alcohol use or have difficulty drinking in moderation.*