

Musculoskeletal (MSI) injuries are one of the most common types of injuries in the trucking industry but are often overlooked. These types of injuries affect the muscles, tendons, and nerves and commonly occur in the shoulders, back, knees and wrists. SAFE Work Manitoba reports that on average, 12 Manitobans will sustain a musculoskeletal injury (MSI) every day, some of which can be career-ending or life-altering.

Definitions:

Musculoskeletal is the name for the system of the human body that is made up of bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments, and other connective tissues that work together to provide structural support for the entire body, protect internal organs, and facilitate movement.

Ergonomics is the science of matching work tasks to the body.

Common MSI Hazards:

Sitting for long periods/awkward posture - Spending hours behind the wheel without taking breaks can cause muscle stiffness and strain, especially in your lower back and legs. Improper seat adjustment can cause improper posture, causing strain on the upper back and neck.



Slip, trips, and falls- Entering or exiting the cab, can also be a root cause for an MSI injury when related to a slip or fall. Strain or sprain could also be a result, from reaching or twisting awkwardly to catch yourself from slipping and falling.

Repetitive and forceful movements - Top MSI injuries happen in the shoulders, back, trunk, and chest. Groin injuries have also been a leading injury for truck drivers, which is caused by thrusting of the body, to throw straps or tarps when securing loads.

Heavy lifting and carrying- Whether you are loading or unloading freight, lifting heavy items with poor lifting techniques can put a

strain on your back, shoulders, and knees.

Temperature fluctuation - The temperature difference from the cab to the outdoor environment, has an impact on the body's response. Sudden exposure to cold/hot temperatures reduces the flexibility and efficiency of muscles and soft tissue.

Vibration - All motorized vehicle operators can be exposed to vibrations especially while driving on uneven roads.

MSI Controls

Stretch before and after tasks - Simple stretches can help prepare your body for the physical demands of the task and relieve tension after a long day on the road. It can also help you assess your physical capabilities and limits in a different environment (cold temperatures).

Driver's seat positioning - If able adjust the headrest, backrest, lumbar, arm rests, seat height and the steering wheel to minimize discomfort while driving. Ensure your hands, wrists, and arms are supported to reduce strain and maintain proper posture.

**Contact RPM for more information on how to be properly fitted to your workstation.*

Duration of task - Continuous work without taking breaks can lead to fatigue. Fatigue of the body can increase the risk of ergonomic hazards when in prolonged positions or while completing repetitive tasks. Follow company policies and be mindful of signs and symptoms of mental and physical fatigue to find out when breaks should be taken.

Personal protective equipment - Proper footwear such as work boots that have gripped soles, will help prevent MSIs by reducing the likelihood of slips, trips and falls.



Three points of contact - Always maintain three points of contact while exiting or entering the cab and/or trailer, as well as when using any ladders to perform tasks. Having three-point contact will reduce the likelihood of falling.



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Preventing Musculoskeletal Injuries (MSI) Among Drivers

Use mechanical aids- Whenever possible, use equipment such as forklifts, pallet jacks, ramps, hoists, or conveyors to move heavy or awkward items rather than lifting them by hand. These tools remove or significantly reduce physical strain on the body.

Taking required break times - Move around and stretch to promote circulation and reduce fatigue.

Safe lifting techniques – Practice safe lifting techniques when lifting or carrying heavy objects.

- Stand close to the load: position yourself close to the object to reduce strain.
- Feet position: position your feet shoulder width apart.
- Bend with your knees: bend at your knees instead of your waist, to grab the object. Make sure you have a firm grip, and lift with your legs. Avoid twisting by pivoting your feet instead of twisting your torso. Seek more education and training on safe lifting examples.

Acclimatize to the environment – Acclimatization is the process in which an individual adjusts to a change in the environment (such as a change in temperature or humidity). Always prepare yourself for temperature changes by dressing in layers or by making sure you are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions when performing work outside of the truck. Staying hydrated and avoiding sugary drinks/food is a helpful technique to consider, for helping the body's adjustment process. Transitioning by turning down the air conditioning, or heat, will give your body more time to adjust before exiting the cab. You should also be aware of the signs of heat or cold stress.

Vehicle maintenance - Preventative maintenance is important to make sure the suspension, seat and steering components are in good condition to minimize vibration and jolts.

Prevention

Preventing musculoskeletal injuries in the trucking industry is crucial for the health and well-being of drivers.

Here are some general tips:

- Training and education in ergonomics.
- Proper care and use of personal equipment.
- Reporting injuries and near misses early is key for prevention to stop recurrence.

Prevention requires awareness, training, and proactive action. By recognizing risk factors and implementing these simple strategies, we can reduce injuries and ensure our workforce stays healthy and productive. Let's prioritize safety and continue driving forward with confidence.

For more information:

- [Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation](#) (see Part 8 MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES, page 136 in the regulations or pdf page 144)
- [Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations](#)

Need more resources? RPM can help!

Ergonomic Assessments

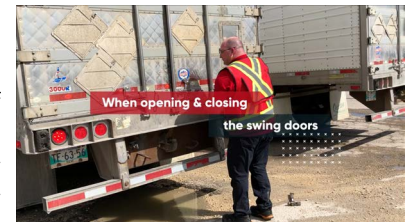
How do you know if your work environment is putting employees at risk of a musculoskeletal injury? or if workers daily tasks are hazardous to their body if done incorrectly? RPM: Trucking Industry Safety can help!

Using state-of-the-art AI, RPM will come to your workplace to monitor employee posture or body movement with a mobile application. After recordings have been captured RPM will send you a complete report of the findings and can assist you with a list of recommendations for you to implement at your workplace.

If you are interested in getting an ergonomics evaluation done at your workplace, please [visit our website](#) to book an assessment!

MSI Prevention Video Series for Professional Drivers

RPM has released a series of short videos to aid in the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries. These videos highlight safer ways to perform a number of common actions in the trucking industry, such as entering & exiting the cab, opening and closing swing doors, cranking landing gear, and more. To obtain copies of these videos, please complete the form below and watch your email for video links. These videos are a great tool for your monthly safety talks! [Visit our website](#) to request your copy of these videos!



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