

# TRANSNEWS



## Capture and Act on Near Misses

Volume 38

W.F. Clayton offers unsurpassed resources to assist in your commitment to safety and loss control. If there are any questions please contact us.

### Inside this issue:

- Capture and Act on Near Misses **1**
- MVRs: Where Driver Safety Begins **1**

Most people involved with workplace safety are very aware of the iceberg theory. It's very simple - for every recorded incident sitting above the surface, there are many unrecorded near misses submerged below the surface. Capture the near misses and act on the causes in order to reduce or eliminate actual incidents from occurring.

In most companies an incident results in an Incident Report and (hopefully) an investigation into why the incident happened and actions to

prevent it from happening again. All of this is well and good and very necessary.

But while many companies have a strong and robust incident reporting and corrective actions system in place, near misses are not subject to the same intensity.

In conversation with workers on site and on the workplace floor, there can usually be found a string of stories about near misses, but when asked if they were reported, there is generally a blank stare.

Reporting a near miss? Well, in theory yes, it should be reported, but in practice there are many reasons why a near miss quickly vaporizes away and doesn't get captured. Some examples include: It's too hard; too much trouble; a general feeling that because there wasn't an actual incident, why bother; managers regard it as time wasting; fear of paper work, particularly with workers of non-English speaking backgrounds.

There is huge opportunity to

*Near Misses (Continued on Page 2)*



### Quick Tips

## MVRs: Where Driver Safety Begins

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates conservatively that each year drowsy drivers are responsible for at least 100,000 automobile crashes, 71,000 injuries, and 1,550 fatalities.

A basic function of fleet management is to assess driver safety risks and provide for the safety of fleet drivers and the public with whom they interact. Assessing driver safety risk begins with MVR reports. I know what you're thinking - we all check MVRs for our commercial drivers - in fact, we are required to - so why this article? Because transportation companies need to think about other drivers who operate non-commercial Company vehicles too - a step that is often overlooked because of

the focus on DOT regulations and operation of BIG vehicles. What every Company needs to understand is that small fleet vehicles also pose risk to a Company.

Prior to the hiring of *any* driver, a driving history risk assessment should be initiated. An MVR review should be part of any pre-employment screening and continue on a regular schedule (quarterly, semi-annually, or at the very minimum annually) for as long as the driver is employed.

When an MVR is reviewed every violation should be examined and considered in the assessment process, however, there are some violations that clearly carry the potential for greater risk than others. Those familiar with reviewing MVRs of commercially regulated drivers should be familiar with these, but just in case:

### Equipment violations

These violations do not signal serious safety risk and are often simply a matter of bad timing (a bulb

*MVRs (Continued on Page 2)*

*Near Misses (Continued from Page 1)*

reduce actual workplace incidents by ramping up the focus on near misses to the same level as actual incidents. But, how do you make it happen?

Business focus has always been on productivity and in the current environment it is even more acute. Managers are generally not keen to see workers spending time on non-productive activities such as filling in reports or to devote additional resources to investigation and recertification. Certainly Incident Reports and the follow up actions are time consuming and probably incur additional expense. There is no simple answer, but the bottom line is

that incidents are not good for business and proven ways to avoid and eliminate incidents, such as acting on near miss information should be the highest priority.

A real opportunity for improvement exists by applying a critical level of focus to the “near miss”. Both managers and workers need to be encouraged to develop comprehensive systems which can capture, analyze and thus prevent future incidents occurring. Those near misses need to be recognized as a free, extremely valuable resource in the battle to create an incident free workplace.

Here’s one thought – a recognition or reward system for reporting of near misses by employees – particularly

ones where there was a organizational issue which contributed (such as housekeeping). In any case, it's worth a shot at trying to capture at least some of the near misses – before they turn into a successful hit and cost the company!

*MVRs (Continued from Page 1)*

burns out and the driver is cited before having it repaired). However, don’t overlook these minor issues completely. A record that indicates a pattern of such violations might reveal a lack of care for the vehicle, which can ultimately incur additional expense.

**Moving violations**

These violations pose a serious risk at various levels and should be acted upon. At the lowest risk level are violations such as failing to signal. Higher up in the scale of risk are more serious violations, such as failing to observe traffic controls (stop signs or lights) and speeding. These violations can pose serious risk to the company if a vehicle is assigned, and they demand immediate attention and investigation by the company.

**Felonies**

The most serious violations can be felonies, such as driving while impaired or reckless driving, even speeding beyond a state-imposed threshold (more than 15 mph over the posted limit, for example). For new-hire candidates, these violations should bring a pause to hiring, and

for existing drivers, serious penalties such as suspension of driving privileges or company vehicle use up to, and including, termination.

All new-hire candidates who will be expected to drive a Company vehicle in their duties from time to time should be clearly informed that prior to employment their MVR will be reviewed to insure they meet eligibility requirements.

Once the MVR has been reviewed, an assessment matrix/policy should outline steps that will be taken during the hiring process or subsequent to hire if the record reveals violations the company considers risk indicators. For example, a single moving violation in a driver’s record might call for probationary use of a company vehicle for a year with any subsequent violations resulting in suspension of privileges.

Similar actions should be taken for existing drivers. The assessment policy should call for an MVR review on every driver at least once each year. The MVR review should be conducted with the driver and any violations that are accrued during the review period should be

addressed in accordance with the assessment policy.

Many companies assign points to various violations. Accumulations of points trigger company-instituted actions. However it is done, the safety of the driver and the general public, and the company’s reputation in the community are foremost in importance, with the costs associated with such risk an additional consideration.

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## Tips for Getting Better Sleep

W.F. Clayton, LLC offers unsurpassed resources to assist in your commitment to safety and loss control. If there are any questions please contact us.

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Sleep isn't an indulgence. Your body needs sleep, and plenty of it. But in a hectic world where you're already pressed for time, getting plenty of high quality sleep can be a bit of a challenge.

### How Sleep Affects Your Health

Your body can't keep going without time to rest and recharge. Sleep is necessary to help regulate hormones and body processes - even the way your cells function. Without enough sleep, your physical and emotional health can suffer. Being short on sleep can make you:

- Tired and stressed
- More likely to catch an illness
- Unable to focus and concentrate at work
- More emotional or moody
- Have trouble making decisions
- Less able to get along with others
- More likely to fall down or have some sort of accident
- Have problems with coordination while

driving, using tools, or working at the computer

All of the above can affect daily activities, and some could be specifically dangerous in the moving & storage business!

### Get the Right Amount of Sleep

On average, most adults need seven or eight hours of quality sleep each night, but there's no hard and fast magic number that's right for everybody. A little quality sleep is better for you than a long night of restless sleep. The amount of sleep that you need changes as you

*Better Sleep (Continued on Page 2)*

## Driver and Vehicle Fitness

Safe driving is a mix of three factors: a mechanically fit vehicle, and a driver who is physiologically and psychologically sound. For example, it is not only important that your brakes are in working order, but also that your eyes are not tired or your stress level too high due to traffic conditions.

Many unsafe driving behaviors are obvious: for example, speeding, reckless lane changing, or drinking and driving. By avoiding

these behaviors, we are safer drivers and are less likely to be involved in accidents. What drivers may not focus on as much is being mentally and physically prepared for driving as a defense against accidents. Consider fatigue – either physical, mental, or a combination of the two. When you're tired, or low on energy, you have a greater risk of falling asleep at the wheel. Physical work combined with missing lunch or neglecting to take

breaks will contribute to drowsiness and/or fatigue. Your reflexes will slow and you are more likely to misjudge traffic conditions.

With the dangers of fatigue evident, a main priority for any driver should be staying alert and attentive.

Obviously being well rested is important for fending off fatigue, but other steps, such as insuring the vehicle well ventilated, can help.

You can avoid eye fatigue by varying the focus of your

*Fitness (Continued on Page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

Tips for Getting Better Sleep **1**

Driver and Vehicle Fitness **1**

*Better Sleep (Continued from Page 1)*

age and varies with hormonal changes.

In any event, you should wake up easily in the morning, feeling refreshed and ready to start the day, not bleary-eyed and stumbling out of bed. If you consistently get seven hours of sleep but still wake up feeling drowsy, you probably need a little more. If you need an alarm clock to get up every day, you are probably not getting enough sleep. Once you figure out what works for you, be consistent about getting that amount every night. And, if you are consistently drowsy even after getting at least seven hours of sleep a night, you may be suffering from a sleep disorder.

**Set the Stage for Better Sleeping**

If you're always tired because you only allow yourself a few hours of sleep each night, you obviously need more rest. But what's even more important is getting better sleep.

Here are tips to make your bedroom a more restful place:

- Keep your room dark and quiet when you sleep.
- Keep the temperature on the cool side at bedtime; people don't sleep as well in rooms that are too hot. Find your best temperature somewhere between 54 and 75 degrees.
- Treat yourself to a comfy bed with the right pillow to support your head and neck.
- Make sure your sheets are clean, soft, and comfortable.
- Save your bedroom for sleeping; keep your TV and computer elsewhere in your home.

**Prep When You're Awake**

What you do during the day has a big impact on the quality of your sleep. Exercise is great early in the day to prepare you for a good night's sleep; working out too close to bedtime can make it difficult for you to fall asleep. Drinking caffeine or

alcohol, eating fattening foods, watching TV, working, and smoking shortly before bed can all make it hard to truly relax. So to get better sleep, start getting your body ready for bed hours before you actually turn in – plan a wind down period right before bed so you can ease your way into a restful night.

**No Skimping Allowed**

Don't think of better sleep as a luxury to enjoy when you have time. You make time for meals, paying bills, and doing household chores because they must be done, right? The same should go for more sleep. Block off the needed hours every night just as you would for those other important responsibilities.

Getting good quality sleep does seem luxurious because it feels great to slip between those clean sheets, relax, and then feel completely refreshed in the morning. So don't skimp on sleep, and look forward to this reward at the end of each long day.

*Fitness (Continued from Page 1)*

concentration rather than staring at a single point in front of you. If you check your mirrors periodically as you should, you will have continual eye movement and less tendency to focus only on the roadway in front of you.

One of the most common causes of vehicle accidents is drivers falling asleep at the wheel. If you find yourself becoming drowsy due to the monotony of driving (or any other reason), you should take appropriate steps depending on the situation. Remember to not to try to be a hero – if traveling alone, take a ten minute power nap – they work wonders. If you have passengers, take a quick break to stop to get some coffee and walk around a bit – there are lots of reasons you can tell any passenger you need to stop – and “I'm tired” shouldn't be one of them! (Examples - check tire pressure, go to rest

room, return Company call?) Remember, better to get there late than not at all.

Here are some other tips for getting there safely:

- Plan stops during long trips, and more frequently during overnight trips. If you have a co-driver, turn the wheel over to him/her before you get too tired.
- Plan your route on trips to unfamiliar areas. This will help you get to your destination as efficiently and safely as possible without having to worry about where you are going. Too much time spent searching for street signs or highway exits is a dangerous distraction.
- Reduce your stress behind the wheel. Most stress comes from

traffic patterns or other drivers, so learn to expect and cope with each. Expect inevitable traffic delays - it helps to think and know that other drivers are also frustrated and that traffic congestion is not a conspiracy against you alone. And, when other drivers frustrate you, learn to brush it off and maintain your head as the professional driver you are.

Your driving goal should be to arrive safely. The key to success is trip preparation, adequate rest, avoiding distractions and taking interruptions in stride. Remember – you are in command and can control how you prepare before taking the wheel on a trip and how you react to stresses and any fatigue or drowsiness during the trip!



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## Overconfidence

It's good you feel confident about your job and that you take pride in your ability to do your work quickly and well. However, there is such a thing as overconfidence - when you forget about the hazards and fail to use safe work practices.

No matter how long you have been on the job and no matter how skilled you are; you must remember the basic safety precautions. Don't get complacent!

Experienced workers have paid dearly for carelessness. They have been electrocuted

because they failed to look for power lines near their ladder. They have been burned in explosions when they allowed an ignition source in a flammable atmosphere. They have been killed in falls from heights when they failed to use proper equipment and precautions. They have lost fingers while operating the same machinery they have used without incident for years. They have been disabled in vehicle crashes while driving familiar routes. All workplaces and tasks

have certain hazards and risks. Even an experienced worker can still become entangled in equipment if wearing loose clothing or jewelry. The hazard never changes - only the recognition of it and preparation for it.

So, how do you avoid overconfidence when it comes to safety matters? Here are some suggestions:

- Stay aware of the hazards. Remain alert and focus on doing the job safely.

*Overconfidence (Continued on Page 2)*

## Compressed Air Safety

Compressed air is often misjudged and not recognized as a hazard because people often think of air as harmless. CAUTION: SERIOUS INJURY MAY OCCUR!

### Did you know...

- Air forced into body tissues through the skin can cause an air embolism (air bubbles in the blood stream) which can be fatal if it reaches the heart, lungs, or brain.
- Inflation injuries of the intestine can be caused by

air being directed at private body areas. A worker in the US died of injuries sustained through horseplay with a compressed air hose. This act of horseplay can be deadly!

- Air blown into the mouth at only 5 PSI can rupture the esophagus or the lungs.
- Eye and ear injuries can occur from a blast of air or flying particles. These types of eye and ear

injuries can cause partial or total loss of sight or hearing.

- The sound from a compressed air hose can reach 120-130 dB which is well above OSHA's 90 dB permissible exposure limit.
- 40 PSI can blow out an ear drum from 4 inches away and possibly cause brain damage.
- As little as 12 PSI can blow an eye out of its socket!

*Air Safety (Continued on Page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

Overconfidence	1
Compressed Air Safety	1
10 Rules to Preserve 10 Fingers	2

## 10 Rules to Preserve 10 Fingers

1. Beware of pinch points. Train yourself to recognize pinch points and avoid placing your hands and fingers in hazardous spots.
2. Expect the expected. When using wrenches and other hand tools with which you expect resistance, anticipate that the tool might slip or the object to which pressure is being applied may suddenly give way.
3. Inspect tools. Check to see if they are in good condition and safe to use.
4. Do not work on moving equipment unless absolutely necessary. If the equipment can be stopped, do so. Working on moving equipment presents a real threat to hands and fingers.
5. Replace machine guards following repairs that require removal of guards. The presence of machine guards is an important factor in keeping hands and fingers out of dangerous areas.
6. Be mindful of equipment that starts automatically. Never work on such equipment without first eliminating the possibility of automatic start-up.
7. De-energize electrical equipment prior to working on it. Flash burns caused by electrical equipment shorting out, is a threat to hands and fingers when work around such equipment is being performed.
8. Be mindful when closing doors. Keep hands and fingers clear.
9. Avoid touching lines or equipment that is hot. Every hot line or hot piece of equipment is a potential source of painful injury to any hand or finger that comes in contact with it.
10. If the work being performed requires gloves, use them. Gloves offer protection from sharp objects, wood and metal splinters, acids, electrical burns, chemicals, heat burns and many other sources of injury.

### *Air Safety (Continued from Page 1)*

- Flying particles can cause cuts and bruises to any part of the body.

These gloomy scenarios reinforce the dangers of compressed air. While workers may not be typically exposed to many of these scenarios unless there is horseplay occurring, it is nonetheless important to understand the danger of compressed air – especially in scenarios which occur during regular job duties and not horseplay.

#### **REMEMBER**

- Hoses and lines should be rated to meet the maximum operating pressure of the equipment.
- Always wear proper Personal Protective Equipment:
  - o Safety glasses with side shields and a face shield if needed
  - o Hearing protection

- o Respiratory protection, depending on the material(s) that you are working with
- Normal work clothing is not protection against compressed air
- If you must clean with compressed air, do not use air that is set above 30 PSI. You must also have effective chip guarding and proper PPE.
- NEVER USE COMPRESSED AIR TO CLEAN CLOTHING OR HAIR!
- NEVER POINT COMPRESSED AIR AT YOURSELF OR ANOTHER PERSON!



### *Overconfidence (Continued from Page 1)*

- Take a moment before doing any task to think about dangers and assess your preparation for them – experienced workers should be able to identify hazardous situations pretty easily.
- Follow the recommended safe work practices at all times. Do not take short cuts.
- Wear your Personal Protective Equipment -- every time.
- Pay attention during safety meetings. You may have heard it all before, but a reminder never hurts.

As an experienced worker, you have a responsibility to set a good example for newcomers. Do things the safe way, because someone may be watching and learning from you. Never let overconfidence compromise your safety.

**Answering a text message  
takes your attention away  
for about 5 seconds.**



That's enough time to travel  
the length of a football field.



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