

Avoiding Injury Risk with 3 Points of Contact

Falling while entering or exiting a commercial motor vehicles or trailers can cause serious injuries. Many driver knee, ankle and back injuries result from jumping from the equipment onto uneven ground or objects. When getting in and out of a vehicle several times per day, it's very easy to get complacent. However, with complacency, you risk serious injury.

According to a report a few years ago from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), truck drivers had more non-fatal injuries than any other industry. One common area often overlooked is safety risks associated with entering and exiting a vehicle. Below are some common practices to remember.

Three-point Contact:

The biggest cause of falls from a vehicle is human error and failure to follow the "Three Point Rule". By successfully using a three-point contact (one hand, two feet / two hands, one foot), you can minimize your chances for an accident. When entering a vehicle, always remember to face it. Use the grab bar for leverage. If a handle is unavailable, grasp the seat or another fixed object in the vehicle.

Plan your steps:

Plan your steps into the vehicle so that you are standing on the same leg as the side you are entering. To enter the left/driver's side, stand on your left leg and lift your right leg up. Always keep three points of contact with the vehicle. Ensure to maintain the three-point rule until you are securely seated or firmly on the ground.



Check out the ground:

To exit the vehicle, be sure to check out the ground before you step out. Take extra precautions when encountering snow, ice, water or uneven pavements. Face the vehicle and step down backward while holding onto the grab bar or other stable surface. Use all the steps until you reach the ground. Never jump down or "fall" down forward out of a vehicle; you can catch your clothing on the door handle, seat adjustments, seat belt, etc., causing a serious and uncontrolled fall creating a serious injury.

Jumping:

Jumping out of a tractor increases force and strain on bones and joints (mostly ankle, knee and back). When jumping from the top step it can apply 7.1 times your body weight to back and leg joints (on a 200 lb. man it adds 1,420 pounds of force). Add this impact to frequent entries and exits, and you are at risk for an ergonomic injury.

Trailers:

The Three Point Rule requires three of four points of contact to also be maintained with trailers as well. This system allows maximum stability and support, reducing the likelihood of slipping or falling.



What The Motor Carrier Can Do:

As motor carriers look to reduce injuries, workers comp. claims, and keep insurance premiums at a minimum; it pays to have a set plan on what can be done from the perspective of motor carriers for injury reduction focus.

- Evaluate every truck and piece of equipment.
- Provide additional steps, non-slip surfaces and hand holds where necessary.
- Maintain steps, contact surfaces and handholds in useable condition. Inspect frequently.
- Instruct all workers on safely exiting and entering equipment, including the 3-point contact method.
- Install warning decals or signs in the cab or on the door of trucks and heavy equipment reminding workers to use 3-point contact.
- Perform observation audits to ensure the policies and procedures are being followed.

What The Driver Can Do:

Drivers are truly the backbone of a company. Having procedures that strengthen their safety awareness helps strengthen knowledge within the driving workforce.

- Keep steps, ladders and standing surfaces free of snow, mud and debris. Report damage immediately.
- Don't use tires or wheels as a step surface.
- Don't use the doorframe or door edge as a handhold.
- Wear footwear with good support and slip resistance.
- Don't climb down with something in your hand. Leave it on the vehicle floor and retrieve it after getting safely on the ground.
- Don't rush to climb out after a long shift.
- Descend slowly to avoid straining a muscle.
- Be extra careful when working in inclement weather.
- Exit and enter facing the cab.
- Get a firm grip on rails or handles.
- **Never Jump!** You may land on an uneven surface, off balance or on something. Look before exiting.

In Conclusion~

Never underestimate any situation. Always be prepared and vigilant. Keeping safety in focus as a #1 priority helps maintain a motor carriers safe practices and ensures awareness. A driver is only as prepared as the training they receive. What does the training at the motor carrier say to the motoring public about how well prepped each driver is for the road.

Drive & Stay Safe

