

# Physical and mental impacts on safety in the transport supply chain

## Background

The *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022* outlines two targets:

- 30 per cent reduction in musculoskeletal disorders by 2022
- supply chains and road transport are focus areas.



6 in 10 serious injury claims in road freight were for musculoskeletal disorders



Typically \$53,000 in claim payments, and 34 weeks off work for mental health disorder claims



Average workers' compensation cost per musculoskeletal disorders claim is \$18,992



\$75,970 for other business costs such as training replacement workers

**Average total costs of \$94,962 for a single musculoskeletal disorder claim**

## What we did

- Conducted surveys and focus groups with the transport industry in urban and regional areas with 135 employers and 116 truck drivers participating.
- Discussed transport operators' experiences and examples related to hazardous manual tasks, which can cause musculoskeletal disorders and work-related stress in the supply chain.

## What we found

### Customer sites

Issue	Examples
<b>Loading and unloading site design</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inadequate space for loading/unloading and maneuvering activities.</li><li>• No docks.</li><li>• Clients underestimate the space required for certain vehicles.</li></ul>
<b>Unsafe interactions with members of the public</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At shopping centres.</li><li>• Trucks required to reverse onto roads or interact with the public.</li><li>• Local strip shopping - trucks use council loading zones, other carparks or double park to deliver goods.</li></ul>
<b>Site traffic management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of exclusion zones for truck drivers during forklift loading/unloading activities.</li><li>• Multiple vehicle interactions around loading/unloading zones.</li></ul>
<b>Delays while waiting to be loaded/unloaded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor communication and cooperation between parties.</li><li>• Impacts on the driver's delivery schedule, e.g. other scheduled deliveries/pick-ups, driving hours, rest breaks.</li></ul>
<b>Lack of mechanical aids</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of clarity about who provides mechanical aids.</li><li>• Poor maintenance of mechanical aids supplied by customers.</li><li>• Transport operators concerned that mechanical aids take up 'paid space' on trucks.</li></ul>



## Working on and around trucks

Issue	Examples
<b>Access and egress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poorly designed steps and inadequate hand holds.</li> </ul>
<b>Load restraint</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drivers may disagree with their customers' loading and/or restraint methods, but are responsible for the load during transit.</li> <li>Load restraint devices including curtains and gates cause awkward postures and forceful exertions.</li> </ul>

## Time pressure

Issue	Examples
<b>Time slots</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure from schedulers/customers to make expected time slots/delivery times.</li> <li>Sources of delay e.g. impractical allocated delivery time, traffic conditions, legislated breaks.</li> <li>Contractual penalties if timeslots are missed.</li> <li>Types of workplaces identified – port, rail terminals, distribution centres and suppliers to mine sites.</li> </ul>
<b>Customer expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport operators believed that customers have unrealistic expectations about delivery times.</li> </ul>
<b>Drivers have little input into their schedules</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislative driving hours system seen to be rigid and removed control from drivers.</li> </ul>
<b>Enforcement agency impacts on drivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport operators see that stops for enforcement action impacted their ability to comply with their rest breaks and delivery schedules.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of schedulers, sales people, managers on drivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seen to have a substantial impact on driver's schedules.</li> <li>Perceived that these groups don't allow for the realities of the driving task when developing schedules.</li> <li>Hold considerable control over driver schedules which isn't always distributed fairly.</li> </ul>

## On road issues

Issue	Examples
<b>Other road users</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsafe actions of other drivers when interacting with trucks.</li> <li>Perceived negative community attitudes about truck drivers.</li> </ul>
<b>Weather</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of particular concern in North Queensland.</li> <li>Impacts on work schedules and time pressure.</li> </ul>
<b>Road conditions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor condition of roads and lack of infrastructure (usually a larger issue in regional/remote areas).</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

- Improve the quality of consultation between supply chain parties as required by work health and safety laws. If multiple parties have a legal obligation relating to the same matter they must consult, cooperate and coordinate activities. For example, transport operators and customers should work together to identify risks and controls, to improve systems of works such as time slots.
- Risk management approaches need to be based on risk factors for hazardous manual tasks, work-related stress and chronic disease. Refer to tools such as Participative Ergonomics for Manual Tasks ([PErforM](#)), Manual Tasks Risk Assessment ([ManTRA](#)), [Work Health Planning Guide](#) and [People at Work, Work-Related Stress tip sheets](#) and [Psychological Health for Small business](#).
- Relevant supply chain parties should be involved in developing and implementing controls as they often have responsibility for factors that contribute to risk for transport operators. For example, where the risk involves unsafe interactions around a loading dock, the customer site should be involved as they have responsibility for the infrastructure.
- Specific contract provisions should address issues that impact on hazardous manual tasks and work-related stress issues such as scheduling, incentives and penalties.

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