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# Reducing Injuries in the Trucking Industry

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Survey Results Assessing the Needs of Washington State  
Trucking Companies



Trucking Injury Reduction  
The Safety and Health Assessment and Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program  
*Promoting Safer, Healthier Workplaces*



## Results of 2005 Survey of Washington State Trucking Industry Employers

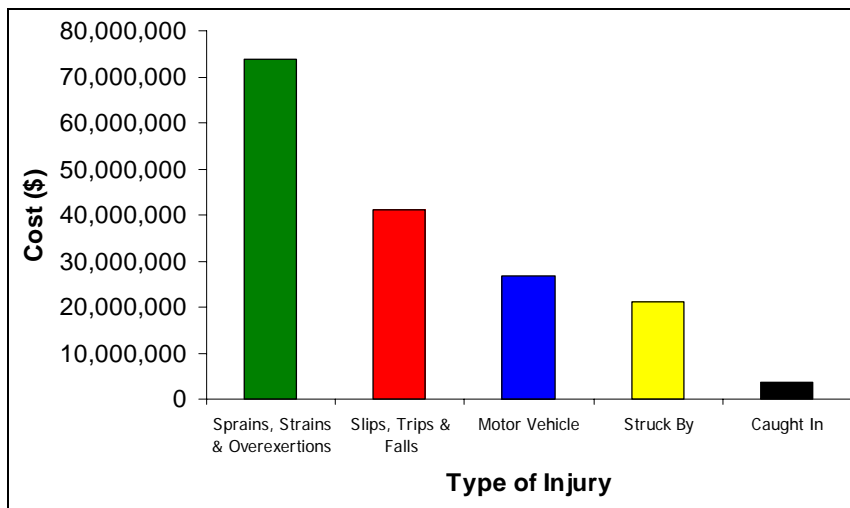
Recent data shows that the trucking industry in Washington State experiences a high number of injury claims and high costs for workers' compensation. The Safety & Health Assessment & Research for Prevention (SHARP) Program has been gathering and analyzing information about what trucking companies can do to reduce these injuries and costs. This document provides some basic data on injuries in the trucking industry and summarizes the results of a 2005 survey.

### Background – What Recent Data Shows

Prior to the survey, our analysis of compensable workers' compensation claims for the highest cost injury showed:

- General Freight Trucking & Specialized Freight Trucking were both in the top five industries for highest lost-time number and rate of claims
- Over 66% of the costs from these injuries were from Strains, Sprains & Overexertions or Slips, Trips & Falls

**Figure 1. Workers Compensation Costs for Injuries in the Trucking Industry**



Source: Department of Labor & Industries state-fund data, 1998-2002.

### The Survey

In the spring of 2005 we mailed a survey to 690 Washington trucking companies asking them to identify the biggest problems with injuries, the reasons for injuries, possible solutions, and barriers to implementing solutions. We received 359 surveys after phone follow-up, with representation from all types of trucking.



**Trucking is one of the Top 5 industries with high claims.**

**Most injuries are from slips, trips, & falls or overexertions.**

**Strains, Sprains & Overexertions** were identified as the biggest injury problem:

**Reasons for Injuries:**

- Loading/Unloading Freight, Awkward Lifting
- Employee Behavior and Methods
- Tarping, Throwing Wrappers, Securing Straps

**Possible Solutions:**

- Education, Training and Reminders
- Planning, Communications, Working as a Team
- Using Proper Equipment and Techniques

**Slips, Trips, & Falls** were identified as the second biggest injury problem:

**Reasons for Injuries:**

- Employee Behavior and Methods
- Climbing In/Out, Falling off Load/Truck
- Weather/Slippery Walking Surface

**Possible Solutions:**

- Planning, Getting Help, Working as a Team
- Slip/Fall Interventions (shoes, surfacing, salt)
- Education, Training and Reminders

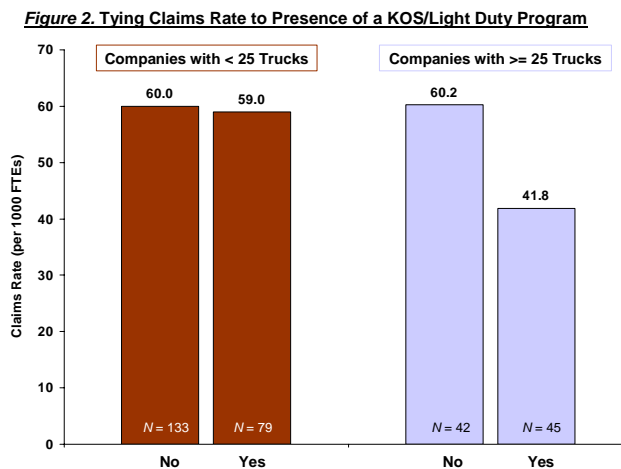
Companies listed the following as the most frequent barriers to putting solutions in place to prevent injuries:

- Employee Lack of Risk Awareness
- Time and Logistics of Doing Training
- Lack of Ability to Supervise or Control Environment

**What Companies are Doing to Reduce Claims**

Employers that have fewer injury claims than other trucking companies in Washington use specific practices to reduce injuries. We linked some of the practices identified in the survey to existing data on claims rates:

- Companies who keep injured employees on salary (KOS/Light-Duty) have fewer claims.
- Larger companies (those with more than 25 trucks) had a greater reduction in their injury claims rate than smaller ones for those having a KOS/Light-Duty program.



**Planning and working as a team – consistently identified as solutions for injuries!**

*“We have made great strides in reducing workplace injuries and the associated costs through training, kept on salary and light-duty programs.”*

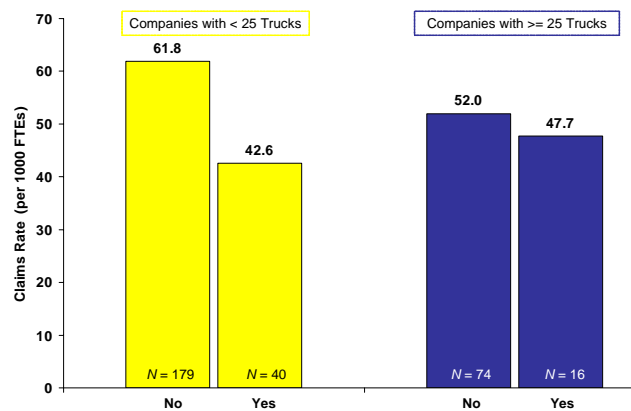
- Anonymous Survey Respondent



**Keeping injured employees on salary is linked to having fewer injury claims.**

- Companies with a safety incentive program for employees and one for supervisors have fewer workers' compensation claims than companies without these programs.
- Having a safety incentive program appeared to have more of a positive effect in companies with less than 25 trucks).

**Figure 3. Tying Claims Rate to Presence of a Safety Incentive Program**



**Quality safety incentive programs are linked with having fewer injury claims.**

*“Most all these injuries are preventable, with the exception of fraudulent claims!”*

- Anonymous Survey Respondent



### Long-Term Strategies to Reduce Injuries

- Proper equipment to reduce heavy and awkward lifting and manual loading and unloading may reduce the number of workers' compensation claims associated with strains, sprains, & overexertion injuries.
- Proper equipment and planning to reduce the sense of urgency among workers could reduce costs associated with slips, trips, and fall injuries.
- “Planning” and “working as a team” were consistently identified as solutions for how to strategically reduce workplace injuries.
- Having a well designed safety incentive program that rewards identifying and fixing hazards may reduce injuries and claims.
- Keeping injured employees on salary may reduce injury costs.

Although each of these require upfront time and money, they are long-term investments that payoff in terms of direct cost savings from fewer injured workers and indirect savings in terms of a healthier and more productive workforce.

### Want to Participate in a Pilot Program to Reduce Costs?

Please contact us if you would like to participate in a program to reduce injuries and workers' compensation costs in your company.

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*We thank the Washington Trucking Associations for advice and support of this project!*