

Falls are a leading cause of truck driver injuries

Safe work practices for drivers

Falls from height are a leading cause of injury for commercial drivers. Jumping from cabs and trailer decks can result in serious injuries.

The safety issue

Jumping from the cab, top step, fifth-wheel area, or trailer deck increases your risk of injury by impacting your joints, lower back, and lower limbs. Jumping from the cab floor or trailer also increases your risk of a slip, trip, or fall injury when you land on the ground.

Your chances of injury increase significantly if your footwear doesn't have sufficient grip or if the ground is wet, uneven, snow covered, muddy or coated in diesel fuel, oil, or grease.

The safety solution

Always maintain three points of contact. This means keeping two hands and one foot — or two feet and one hand — on the vehicle or equipment at all times. Use this technique every time you get in and out of your truck.

Suggested safe work practices*

- If it's your first time driving the truck, take a few moments to learn the placement of the handholds, steps, and handrails.
- Wear proper footwear (no cowboy boots) with good support and slip-resistant soles, ensure your clothing isn't loose or torn, and wear a suitable high-visibility safety vest.
- Before exiting your truck, apply the handbrake, turn off the engine, and remove the keys.
- Look at the condition of the steps and ground below the cab. Are the steps icy or covered in grease? Is the ground uneven or slippery? Are there obstacles in the way?
- When exiting the cab, always use three points of contact. Securely grip the handholds and use the footholds. Always face toward the truck and only use the steering wheel as a grip if the manufacturer permits it.

* Before developing your own specific safe work practices (SWPs), you should consult with your joint committee (or safety representative) and workers who do the job. Employers need to provide workers with copies of the SWPs or post them in the area where the work activity occurs. SWPs should be reviewed whenever a job changes, new equipment is introduced, or workers return after an extended absence. In addition, SWPs may need to be adjusted as the result of an inspection or an incident investigation.



Jumping from the cab of a tractor unit can create an impact force of 5 to 7 times your body weight. So, if you weigh 200 lb. (91 kg), the impact force of jumping from the cab is almost 1500 lb. (680 kg). Compare that with using correct three-point contact and carefully stepping down from the lower step, which only creates an impact force of 1 to 1.5 times your body weight.

(Source: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries)

- Avoid using the door frame as a handhold or the wheel hubs or tires as a step.
- Climb down slowly — don't rush, no matter what the work pressures might be. Keep your weight evenly distributed among the three points of contact. Avoid any sudden movements that can throw you off balance.
- Break three points of contact with your truck only when you safely reach the ground or a secure work platform.
- Practice good housekeeping. Make sure working surfaces, steps, and walkways are free of snow, mud, oil, grease, and debris.
- Never climb down while holding an object. Place items such as work gloves, paperwork, or electronic devices on the cab floor, in a place where they won't create a tripping hazard and where they can be safely retrieved when you're on the ground.

For more information on workplace health and safety, visit worksafebc.com and SafetyDriven.ca.