

# Delivery Driver Safety Fact Sheet

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**T**oday's world depends on delivery drivers.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 1.5 million drivers in traditional delivery jobs hit the road in the United States each day. Millions more are independent contractors for on-demand delivery services. In recent years as consumer demand for this industry has increased, so has the challenges for creating a comprehensive delivery driver safety program. Although there is no one-size-fits-all solution, several measures can reduce delivery drivers' risks and help ensure that deliveries are made without incident.

## Delivery Driver Jobs

Delivery workers – drivers who bring meals, groceries, packages, and freight to homes and businesses -- are an essential part of the Texas economy. To provide safe working environments for delivery drivers, it's important to understand the different roles, tasks, responsibilities, and risks these workers face on the job.

### **Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers**

In 2018, approximately 200,000 Texans worked as heavy or tractor-trailer truck drivers.<sup>2</sup> These drivers work for freight lines, wholesalers, manufacturers, and other companies transporting goods from one location to another over intercity and often multiple-state routes. Most tractor-trailer drivers and long-haul drivers



operate trucks with weight limits exceeding 26,000 pounds. Working as a long-haul truck driver is a lifestyle choice because these drivers can spend days or weeks at a time away from home. Because of the potential for traffic accidents, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers have one of the highest rates of injuries and illnesses of all occupations.<sup>3</sup>

### **Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers**

More than 67,000 Texans worked as light truck or delivery services drivers in 2018. These workers -- often called pick-up and delivery (P&O) drivers -- are the most common type of delivery drivers. They drive small trucks or vans from distribution centers to delivery or pick-up locations based on a set schedule, usually within a local region or urban area. Some drivers stop at a distribution center only once in the morning and make many stops throughout the day. Others make multiple trips between a distribution or retail center and delivery locations. Many light truck or delivery services drivers also load and unload vehicles. These drivers have among the highest rates of injuries and illnesses of all occupations due to lifting and moving heavy objects, as well as from vehicle accidents.<sup>4</sup>

### **Driver/Sales Workers**

Driver/sales workers use company or personal vehicles within established routes or in an established territory to sell and deliver goods, such as food products, including restaurant take-out items



or pick-up and delivery of items such as commercial laundry. These drivers may take orders, collect payment, and stock merchandise at the point of delivery. Approximately 45,000 Texans worked as driver/sales workers in 2018. They often face risks associated with lifting, carrying, walking long distances, driving in congested traffic, and dealing with the stress of making deliveries on time.<sup>5</sup>

### **Couriers and Messengers**

About 6,200 Texans worked as couriers and messengers in 2018. These workers pick-up and deliver messages, documents, packages, and other items between offices, departments, or other businesses. While some couriers and messengers travel on foot, most use bicycles, motorcycles, automobiles, or public transportation to make deliveries and pick-ups. These workers face risks associated with travel and maneuvering through traffic congestion.<sup>6</sup>

### **On-Demand Delivery Service Drivers**

On-demand delivery services are part of the growing gig economy, a labor market characterized by people working in short-term contracts or “side hustles” instead of permanent jobs. These “contingent workers” – those who are not employees of a company but who offer temporary services as needed – connect to customers through digital platforms, such as cell phone apps, to deliver restaurant take-out food, groceries, alcohol, flowers, laundry and dry cleaning, and in some cases, items from thousands of retail shops. These third-party delivery services offer customers on-demand delivery of goods, while giving workers the flexibility to earn income with their vehicles at times, days, and locations convenient for them. The downside for these workers currently is that they are stripped of any benefits, insurance, sick leave, or overtime compensation. Yet they share similar travel and traffic-related risks as traditional delivery drivers. Although numbers of people who work in the gig economy are difficult to track, estimates suggest that contingent workers, such as on-demand delivery drivers, make up the largest U.S. job growth sector in the last 10 years.<sup>7</sup>

## **Best Practices for Delivery Driver Training**

For businesses who want to grow delivery service revenue, it's important to take stock of the hazards faced by operating a fleet of trucks, vans, cars, bikes, or other light-duty vehicles. Whether the company owns or leases the vehicles or requires drivers to use personal transportation, the vehicle and the roadway become an extension of the employee's workplace. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Act's general duty clause, **employers are required to furnish each worker with a place of employment “free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm.”** Although employers have no control over many roadway hazards, they can ensure their employees use safe and properly maintained vehicles and receive regular, quality training.

## **Make Driving Training a Priority**

### **The Challenge**

Transportation incidents are the leading cause of work-related fatalities in Texas and across the United States. **About two Texans die each day in work-related transportation incidents.**<sup>8</sup>

### **The Cause**

Employers may think there are not enough resources to routinely provide driving safety

training to employees. However, employers bear the burden, cost, and liability of work-related injuries. The average cost to an employer for an on-the-job driving accident is \$16,500. When a worker is injured, the average employer cost is \$74,000. If a death occurs, costs can exceed \$500,000. **Motor vehicle crashes cost U.S. employers over \$60 billion annually in medical care, legal expenses, property damage, and lost productivity.**<sup>9</sup>

### **The Solution**

An Occupational Driving Safety Workplace Program can greatly reduce risks for employees, their families, and the company's bottom line. **Developing specific driving policies, communicating those policies with employees at orientation and annually, enforcing a strong vehicle maintenance program, and reviewing driving safety tips regularly helps reduce on-the-job traffic-related incidents.** Small, medium, and large companies consistently show positive returns-on-investment when starting a driving safety program. For example, the City of Austin Public Works Department saw a 50% reduction in preventable collisions after training 100% of its employees in defensive driving instruction.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, a driving safety program shows employees that management is concerned with their health and welfare.

### **Get Started Today**

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC)-Workplace

Safety offers a three-hour **Occupational Driving Safety Training Program**. The training covers employee policies; driver skill and behavior assessment; distracted, impaired, and fatigued driving; vehicle operation and maintenance; weather and road conditions; and driver-instruction recommendations. Customized training is also available to include the risk factors outlined below that are specific to delivery drivers. For more information on DWC's driving safety training, contact [www.txsafetyatwork.com](http://www.txsafetyatwork.com), [safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov), or 1-800-252-7031, Option 2.

## **Crime & Violence Prevention**

### **The Challenge**

Crime and violence in the workplace has emerged as one of the primary causes of job-related deaths.<sup>11</sup> The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) estimates **about 1.7 million people in the U.S. are victims of workplace violence each year.**<sup>12</sup> Although workplace violence includes any act of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or threatening behavior, delivery drivers also face the possibility of theft, armed robbery, assault, and homicide.

### **The Cause**

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) identified multiple **factors that place delivery drivers at risk for violence: contact with the public; exchange of money; working alone; working late at night; delivering or guarding valuable goods; and working in high-**

**crime areas.**<sup>13</sup> Food delivery drivers face the additional risk of animal attacks during home delivery because of the smell of food or pets who are distrustful of others.

### **The Solution**

Employers need to **build a solid foundation of safety that includes continual training throughout delivery drivers' careers.** Management should consider drivers' safety and security daily before deliveries, and continually encourage the following behaviors:

### **Delivery Driver Tips**

- **Remain aware of surroundings.** Robbers often lurk around residences and delivery locations waiting for drivers to arrive. Avoid areas not well lit. Always look for suspicious persons loitering around delivery locations.
- **Pay attention to vehicles that may follow delivery drivers.** Thieves may follow a driver as they leave a restaurant, office, or distribution center. If followed, drivers should not exit the vehicle, but lock the doors (if available on the delivery vehicle) and call police. Couriers and messengers using bikes, motorcycles, or public transportation should find a safe, public location, notify security if available, and call police.
- **Ensure the vehicle is in proper operating condition before making deliveries.** Whether using



a personal or company-owned vehicle, if the driver suspects the vehicle needs repair, return to the workplace as soon as possible. Always carry a backup communications device, such as a personal cell phone with a charger.

- **Never deliver to a location that looks vacant or to a hotel room.** If in doubt, call the customer to meet you outside or in the hotel lobby.
- **Use body language that shows authority.** Delivery drivers should walk confidently with their head up and back straight. If something doesn't look or feel right, do not make the delivery. Call the employer and explain. Encourage drivers to trust their instincts.
- **Park as close as possible to the delivery location.** If possible, shine the vehicle's headlights on the delivery area or door at night. If close parking is unavailable, park under a street or parking lot light. Avoid

parking in isolated areas. Always lock the vehicle and take the keys.

- **Stay in plain view.** Never walk behind a dark building, go to a side door, or get called away from public sight.
- **Keep an arm's distance from the public.** If a delivery driver is approached by someone, encourage the driver to keep at least three feet away.
- **Carry a first aid kit and a flashlight.**
- **Call 911 in an emergency.** If in danger, call 911 and wait for the police to arrive at the scene. If the suspect has left, drivers should go to a safe location. Do not go to the next delivery. Protect any evidence the suspect may have left or touched. Get the contact information of witnesses and ask them to remain until police arrive.

### **Employer Tips**

- **Limit the use of cash.** Create a cashless delivery system to discourage robberies. If not possible, have drivers make regular cash drops during each shift. Consider posting signs on delivery vehicles stating, "Drivers carry no cash."
- **Track deliveries.** Use caller IDs to help trace the location of deliveries. Always ask or store a callback number for customers and verify the

number before delivery. Use automatic vehicle location or global positioning systems (GPS) to locate drivers during deliveries and if in distress.

- **Equip drivers with cell phones or alternative means of communication.** In the event of theft or assault ensure drivers have an alternative means to contact the company or emergency services. Consider providing one of the many types of one-button protection devices on the market, which provide quick dispatch to local authorities to call help when needed.
- **Consider NOT having a sign on top of food delivery vehicles.** This can decrease the wrong kind of attention to the delivery driver and the vehicle.
- **Avoid scheduling employees for late-night or early-morning deliveries when possible.**

### ***Get Started Today***

Employers are responsible for proactively providing safety to their employees. Some of the most important **precautions to implement to protect delivery drivers include vehicle inspections at the beginning of each scheduled route; location tracking that shares real-time locations with supervisors using smartphones or other tracking technologies; and safety training to identify potential risks and ways to avoid threats.**

# Environmental Heat Exposure

## The Challenge

About 900 employees in transportation and material moving occupations in the U.S. suffered injuries or illnesses in 2018 due to environmental heat exposure.<sup>14</sup> Delivery drivers have reported dangerous symptoms of **heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and dehydration**, including nausea, profuse vomiting, and kidney failure after repeated heat exposure over several days.<sup>15</sup> Fifty of those drivers who suffered heat-related illnesses call Texas home.<sup>16</sup>

## The Cause

Texas is known for its summer heat. Despite this, **many delivery trucks are not air-conditioned. Even fewer trucks have air-conditioned cargo areas.** On long, hot workdays, which can span more than 12 hours, temperatures in the cargo area of a truck can soar to 140 degrees and higher. UPS drivers have recorded temperatures in cargo areas as high as 152 degrees.<sup>17</sup> The temperature concerns, however, are not limited to truck cabins and cargo areas. **Most loading facilities are un-air-conditioned.** Additionally, much of the job – unloading deliveries, unhooking the rig, and carrying packages to customers – can expose delivery drivers to extreme heat and exhaustion.

## The Solution

Ensuring that delivery drivers **know the risks associated with**



**heat and how to manage the threat** is one of the most important measures safety managers can provide. As part of a regular delivery driver safety training program, include the following information on the hazards of environmental heat exposure.

## Prevent Heat Illnesses

- **Stay hydrated.** Provide delivery drivers with lots of water and encourage delivery drivers to drink at least one pint of water every hour, especially during hot, summer months. Avoid liquids that can dehydrate the body, such as caffeine. Consider carrying frozen water bottles to ensure cool hydration is available later in the shift. Ensure water is close and available to delivery drivers at loading areas and in distribution centers.
- **Modify Work Schedules.** Monitor the temperature throughout the day and modify work schedules to limit strenuous activity during peak hours of heat from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Allow or arrange for frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- **Avoid clothing that traps heat.** Waterproof clothing and wet or sweat-soaked clothing can trap heat. Avoid wearing rain-resistant protection longer than necessary. Layer a work shirt over an undershirt to help keep sweat and heat away from the skin. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing, if possible. Carry spare shirts to replace wet or sweaty shirts as needed. Consider carrying wet neck towels or gel-filled cooling neck scarves or cooling vests to keep body heat down.
- **Monitor body functions.** Monitor heat's effect on the body by checking the color of your urine – dark yellow urine means it's time to hydrate. Delivery drivers expect to sweat in the heat, but decreased sweating can also mean dehydration.



- **Slowly acclimate new or returning workers to the heat.** Gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for workers new to the heat or those who have been away from work. Their bodies need time to adapt to working in the heat.

- **Know the signs of heat illness.** Feeling dizzy or sluggish outside on a hot day can be the body's way of signaling a more serious condition.

### **Symptoms of Heat Illnesses**

- **Heat Cramps.** The first sign of a heat illness is often severe muscle spasms caused by salt and water loss. These heat cramps often occur in the hands, calves, or feet. Spasms may stop on their own, but lingering soreness can remain for 24-48 hours.

- **Heat Exhaustion.** Heat exhaustion is more than a feeling of fatigue or weakness. Its symptoms include headache, dizziness, wet skin, irritability, confusion, increased thirst, nausea, or vomiting. Fainting may occur as a person's body tries to regulate the heat by lowering blood pressure. This can lead to a stroke or other life-threatening conditions if left untreated. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body's core temperature increases to 101-104 degrees Fahrenheit.

- **Heat Stroke.** Heat stroke is an emergency medical condition. Drivers should get help fast. The symptoms of heat stroke can include lack of sweat, reddened dry skin, confusion, fainting, collapse, seizures, and organ failure. Heat stroke occurs when the body's core temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

### **What to Do When Showing Signs of Heat Illness**

- **Call a Supervisor for Help.** If the supervisor is not available, call 911. Since most delivery drivers work alone, it's important to get assistance fast.
- **Cool the Body.** Remove outer clothing. Fan and mist the body. Apply ice bags or ice towels, if available.
- **Drink Water.** Drink cool water, if able to drink.

### ***Get Started Today***

At orientation and each year before the long, hot Texas months, **review with employees the dangers of prolonged heat exposure and ways to prevent and treat it.** Consider developing a separate environmental heat training and preparation program to help managers and employees think "outside-of-the-box" on ways to protect delivery drivers. Look for new ways to let employees know management is concerned about their health and well-being. Provide shade and cooling systems when possible. Offer electrolyte popsicles or pickles on hot days to help ease cramps brought on by dehydration. Customize policies and procedures unique to your company operations, employees, and delivery routes. Be prepared to modify schedules and extend breaks as needed to keep delivery drivers healthy and working, and to keep the company's bottom line strong.

## Protection Against Other Bodily Injuries

### **The Challenge**

Delivery drivers are at additional risk for a variety of musculoskeletal injuries, including back, shoulder, neck, and head injuries; ligament, tendon, and meniscus tears; muscle sprains and strains; and broken bones. In 2018, more than 45,500 delivery drivers across the U.S. experienced these types of on-the-job injuries. Texas delivery drivers accounted for more than 6.1% of those injuries.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Cause**

Long hours of heavy lifting and repetitive movement, combined with growing customer demands and delivery quotas, increase the chances of injuries and accidents.

### **The Solution**

The best ways for delivery drivers to avoid these common injuries are to:

- **get adequate rest;**
- **keep fit by stretching and exercising regularly;**
- **practice proper lifting techniques;**
- **avoid repetitive movements when possible; and**
- **use days off for self-care.**



Employers can help drivers reduce these injuries by providing training on and access to any needed tools to assist in safe lifting and delivery, including, but not limited to, motorized lift gates, back braces, dollies, hand trucks, and pallet jacks.

### **Get Started Today**

Employers' general duty to the health and safety of workers includes ensuring delivery drivers have the information they need on a regular basis to make proactive decisions for their health and well-being. **Ensure that part of every delivery driver safety training program includes information on proper lifting techniques** – bending the hips and knees to squat down to the load, keeping it close to the body, and straightening with the legs. Display posters on proper lifting techniques in visible locations throughout distribution centers and loading zones. Hold safety meetings often. Commit to making the safety and health of employees the company's number one priority.

For more information on driving training, download any of [DWC's Free Driving Safety and Health Publications](#) or contact a DWC Safety Training Specialist at [www.txsafetyatwork.com](http://www.txsafetyatwork.com), [safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov), or 1-800-252-7031, Option 2.

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Safety Violations Hotline

**1-800-452-9595**

[safetyhotline@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:safetyhotline@tdi.texas.gov)

The Texas Department of Insurance,  
Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC)  
E-mail [resourcecenter@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:resourcecenter@tdi.texas.gov)  
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

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