



### WORK IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

In Finland, the transportation sector provides employment to more than 113,000, with approximately 70,000 employees in ground traffic. People working in heavy-duty rubber-tyre passenger and freight traffic include, for example, bus, lorry and articulated vehicle drivers. In passenger and freight traffic, the work-related requirements and stress differ to some extent.

# There are solutions for managing the workload factors in the transportation sector

Work in the transportation sector entails many workload factors that affect work ability. Workload is caused by various work-related physical, psychosocial and cognitive demands. The employer and the supervisor must first identify the workload factors before actions can be planned to manage them. By reducing harmful workload and increasing job resources, work ability can be strengthened, sick leave reduced, and disability prevented.

## SOLUTIONS



### Identify and reduce risks related to the physical workload.

Ensure that drivers take appropriate breaks and understand the importance of varying working postures. In addition, ensure that each driver knows how to use load handling accessories and adjust the vehicle seat according to ergonomic instructions.

### Strengthen the job resources,

that support well-being at work and work ability. Resources may relate to, for example, the work tasks, the organisation of work, interpersonal relations in the work community or leadership. Support from the work community and discussing difficult issues with colleagues contribute to well-being at work.

### Support continuous learning.

Make it possible for employees to develop their competence continuously. That strengthens commitment to work and helps the workplace respond to future challenges. Also take care of the development of managers' and supervisors' competence, including work ability management skills.

### Create effective working-time models.

Planning driving schedules and work shifts together promotes work ability, the fair and equal allocation of work shifts and work-life balance.

### Provide sufficient support for work ability.

Develop effective practices for early support for work ability, sick leave monitoring, returning to work and occupational health collaboration. Ensure that everyone is aware of the models, and they are used as agreed. Promote a culture of dialogue, in which matters related to work ability are discussed regularly and can be addressed at a low threshold as early as possible.

# Of transportation and warehousing workers who received disability pension

# 41 %

received disability pension due to a musculoskeletal disease

# 79 %

were over 55 years of age

# 20 %

were on partial disability pension before permanent disability pension

Source: Application analytics, Varma's online service for corporate customers, 2019–2022

## What do we know?

Work in heavy traffic is stressful in many ways. In addition to monotonous physical strain, work and the working environment involve a high risk of accidents. Psychosocial workload is caused by long and irregular work shifts, for example. Shift work also increases the extent to which the employee is bound by the job, and this may make it more difficult to find a good work-life balance. Furthermore, working in a hurry and with tight schedules may increase workload and lead to making compromises with regard to taking all-important, restoring breaks. A driver's work may also be cognitively demanding due to, for example, paying attention to many things at the same time. Studies show that job resources boost well-being and decrease experiences of harmful workload. In working as a driver, key job resources include the independent nature of work, opportunities to influence one's own work and social relations at the workplace. The meaningfulness and appreciation of the work are also significant job resources for drivers.

## Why is this important?

Workload may be appropriate, too high, or too low. If there is repeatedly very low or high workload, this may impair well-being at work and cause health problems. A driver's work puts a strain especially on the musculoskeletal system, and it is important to find individual-specific and workplace-level solutions for this. This makes it possible to strengthen employees' work ability and prevent sick leave and permanent disability.

## What should be done?

It is important for workplaces to identify and manage workload factors and to strengthen the job resources. It is a good idea to get together and contemplate different options and solutions that support work ability. Joint practices and solutions can be related to, for example, work induction, the organisation of work, competence development, the development of a culture of open dialogue or support for work ability.

The effectiveness of work ability promotion is increased by the identification of the workload factors and job resources.



### KEY WORKLOAD FACTORS IN THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

- long-term, uninterrupted sedentary work
- heavy lifting when loading and unloading
- risk of accidents
- long, irregular work shifts (shift work)
- time pressure, unrealistic driving schedules
- working alone
- cognitive stress, paying attention to many things at the same time (e.g., equipment, traffic, customers)

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### HOW THE BUSINESS BRIEF WAS MADE

The solutions are based on Varma's publication series "Tietoa työkyvystä" (in Finnish), which is a collection of information from transportation sector studies and reports related to the workload factors, job resources and work ability in the sector.

Read the publication on our [website](#).

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