Shouldering the Load

More than half of drivers and equipment operators report shoulder and neck pain. If you already have pain this article will give you some tools to reduce your discomfort. If you don’t have any problems with these joints this article is for you. Use these exercises to protect yourself from a painful future.

*Body Position*
Changing posture may not seem like a big deal but the way you sit can make a big difference to the stress on your muscles and go a long way towards reducing joint pain. Even with a good seat, we tend to get lazy and let our body collapse forward. This might feel like it’s easier, but because the weight of your head and chest are now pulling on an angle, the muscles of your back, neck and shoulders have to work in ways that they are not best suited for. So do this routine once an hour and get rid of that pain in your neck! (or shoulder 😜)

1. **Sit up tall.** If your seat is tilted backwards you will now be slightly forward of it. Your spine should be straight from the bottom of your back right through to the back of your head. Check and make sure that your chin is not poking forward or up.
2. **Activate the postural muscles** that are designed to support you by drawing your lower belly in and up, and lifting the pelvic floor (see your Power Driving Manual). Hold this position for a count of 10, relax and repeat 5 times.

3. **Keeping your core activated and your posture lined up**, lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then press them down as far as they will go. Breathe in when you lift your shoulders and out when you lower them. Then cross your arms in front of your chest and rotate your shoulders as far forward as you can, and then reverse the movement by pulling your shoulder blades back. This time breathe out when you rotate your shoulders forward and in when you pull them back. Repeat the whole sequence 5 times.

4. Finish your workout in the tall position, shoulders down but relaxed, core still activated. Move your arms up to the steering wheel or controls and keep that posture as you work.

If you do these exercises 5 times each day you will feel a real improvement in your upper back, neck and shoulders. They are easy to do and won’t interrupt your work, so give them a try!