

REAL LIFE LESSONS

FROM TRUCK DRIVERS INJURED AT WORK



Looking At and Looking For

Most of us have had jobs where we were required to conduct inspections of something or somebody. The first time we conducted the inspection it was awkward, slow and methodical. We were probably trying to either follow an inspection checklist that we had in our hand or one that we had memorized. Soon we realized that having to continuously refer back to a checklist indicated that we either did not know what we were doing or that we could not remember much for long. So, we soon discarded the checklists and conducted the inspections without them.

Basically, there are two reasons for using a checklist. One is to ensure that all items of interest are inspected. The other reason for using a checklist is to compare the current condition/observation to what is considered an acceptable/safe condition, which is listed on the checklist. The presence of an item is important, but so is its serviceability. A vehicle can have four tires present, but if one of them is flat then it is not serviceable. You get the point.

Andy did not get the point. He conducted a vehicle walk-around inspection one afternoon last November and had, unbeknownst to him, the opportunity to avoid an accident. Unfortunately, the quality of his inspection caused him to fail to detect a hazard and not too far down the road that undetected hazard resulted in an avoidable accident.

He was pulling a flatbed with a load of secured liquid totes (he thought) when he rounded a turn in the two lane road. An approaching vehicle had slightly crossed the line onto his side so he immediately braked and steered to the right. When he did his load shifted and caused him to lose control of his vehicle and overturn. The approaching vehicle (a car) avoided contact and drove off, not even knowing what had happened. Andy broke his collar bone and received a citation for load securement. He felt like life was not fair.

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It would be easy to blame the other motorist and to detest the DOT enforcement officer, but think about this situation. If Andy had used a checklist when he conducted his inspection then he would have physically checked the tension on the load securement straps because that was printed on the inspection checklist. But let's give Andy credit for tenure and experience and say that he had the checklist memorized; he still failed to check the tension on the load securement straps.

Why was his inspection not effective? Andy was looking at his load securement but not for load securement. There is a difference between looking at something and looking for something.



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