

Establishing Post-Injury Employability for Heavy and Light Commercial Truck Drivers

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Truck Drivers offer valuable worldwide economic contributions towards the distribution of goods and commodities. As Truck Drivers represent not only a significant proportion of the labor force, but also face numerous work-related risks, vocational counselors must evaluate post-injury employability for Truck Drivers injured in the course and scope of employment. The current article examines the occupation of driving a truck, with specific consideration of DOT and O*NET descriptors, training, cognitive demands, psychosocial factors, and physical demands. Necessary considerations to evaluate expected and reasonable wages are also examined. Using the vocational hierarchy, return-to-work options for Truck Drivers with injuries or disabilities are additionally reviewed. Multiple strategies are explored that forensic vocational rehabilitation consultants must consider when evaluating post-injury or post-accident employability of Truck Drivers with injuries.

Keywords: Truck Driver, Employability, Return-to-Work

The United States economy, similar to the global economy, is based on timely distribution of not only raw products to manufacturers, but also distribution of manufactured products to retailers (Lafontaine & Slade, 1997; Min & Lambert, 2002). Even within an Internet-based distribution system, the economy is dependent on Truck Drivers to ultimately distribute goods to customers (Trossen & Biczok, 2010). While Truck Drivers represent a vital mechanism for transportation of goods (Becklew, 2011), Truck Drivers also face numerous occupationally-related hazards and risks, including multiple cancers (Jarvholm & Silverman, 2003), cardiovascular problems (Chen, Chen, Chang, & Christiana, 2005), depression (Lycan & Ryder, 2003), lower back pain (Brendstrup & Biering-Sorensen, 1987), sleep apnea (Stoohs, Guilleminault, Itoi, & Dement, 2004), and, obviously, propensity towards on-the-road accidents (Akerstedt & Kecklund, 2001; Dionne, Desjardin, Laberge-Naueau, & Maag, 1995). Work-related accidents and injuries for Truck Drivers result in loss time, forfeiture of vocational opportunity, and need to change occupational focus (Hakkanen & Summala, 2001). Establishment of loss wages and loss of wage earning capacity requires methodological standards to not only reduce bias or partiality on behalf of the vocational consultant, but also meet *Daubert* standards. Within the current article, the occupation of driving a truck will be examined, related to numbers employed

in the occupation, required training, and expected wages. In addition, recommendations will be presented to reliably evaluate if truck drivers with injuries may return to work along the vocational hierarchy.

Examination of DOT and O*NET Descriptors

For the sake of brevity, discussion related to DOT descriptors will be limited to a single DOT title, specifically Truck Driver, Heavy (any industry). However, the forensic rehabilitation consultant must be aware that the DOT offers individual numbers and descriptors for numerous truck-related positions, warranting, perhaps, the need to examine multiple descriptors when developing a vocational profile, if the DOT will be used for this purpose. (DOT and O*NET descriptors are offered in Tables 1-3.) According to the DOT, primary job duties for a Truck Driver, Heavy are driving a truck with a capacity of more than 3 tons, driving a truck to a designation, prepare receipts and collect payments, maintain telephone or radio contact with dispatcher, load and unload truck, inspect truck, perform needed emergency roadside repairs, and position blocks or other activities to tie down loads. The position has been designated as Medium duty. Related to general educational development, the DOT specifies to that medium to lower level

Table 1*DOT Descriptor for Truck Driver, Heavy*

CODE: 905.663-014. TITLE(s): TRUCK DRIVER, HEAVY (any industry)

Drives truck with capacity of more than 3 tons, to transport materials to and from specified destinations: Drives truck to destination, applying knowledge of commercial driving regulations and area roads. Prepares receipts for load picked up. Collects payment for goods delivered and for delivery charges. May maintain truck log, according to state and federal regulations. May maintain telephone or radio contact with supervisor to receive delivery instructions. May load and unload truck. May inspect truck equipment and supplies, such as tires, lights, brakes, gas, oil, and water. May perform emergency roadside repairs, such as changing tires, installing light bulbs, tire chains, and spark plugs. May position blocks and tie rope around items to secure cargo during transit. When driving truck equipped for specific purposes, such as fighting fires, digging holes, and installing and repairing utility company lines, may be designated Fire-Truck Driver (petrol. & gas); Hole-Digger-Truck Driver (construction; tel. & tel.; utilities); Tower-Truck Driver (tel. & tel.; utilities). When specializing in making deliveries, may be designated Delivery-Truck Driver, Heavy (any industry). May be designated according to type of truck driven as Truck Driver, Flatbed (logging). May be designated according to kind of cargo transported as Water Hauler (logging).

GOE: 05.08.01 STRENGTH: M GED: R3 M2 L2 SVP: 4 DLU: 81

Table 2*O*NET Descriptor for Light Truck or Delivery Service Drivers*

53-3033.00 - Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers

Drive a light vehicle, such as a truck or van, with a capacity of less than 26,000 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW), primarily to deliver or pick up merchandise or to deliver packages. May load and unload vehicle.

Tasks

- Obey traffic laws and follow established traffic and transportation procedures.
- Inspect and maintain vehicle supplies and equipment, such as gas, oil, water, tires, lights, or brakes, to ensure that vehicles are in proper working condition.
- Report any mechanical problems encountered with vehicles.
- Present bills and receipts and collect payments for goods delivered or loaded.
- Load and unload trucks, vans, or automobiles.
- Verify the contents of inventory loads against shipping papers.
- Turn in receipts and money received from deliveries.
- Maintain records, such as vehicle logs, records of cargo, or billing statements, in accordance with regulations.
- Read maps and follow written or verbal geographic directions.
- Report delays, accidents, or other traffic and transportation situations to bases or other vehicles, using telephones or mobile two-way radios.

reasoning, mathematical, and language capacities are furthermore required. Additionally, the DOT descriptor indicates that additional job-designation titles may be warranted, if a Truck Driver drives a truck equipped for a special purpose.

When using the DOT descriptors, the forensic rehabilitation consultant must be aware that at least two features warrant further scrutiny, specifically Date of Last Update (1981) and designated strength level

(medium). Anecdotally, the DOT descriptor was last updated when MTV began airing on cable, or greater than 30 years ago, resulting in probable limited timeliness, as offering a modern descriptor. Moreover, the DOT misaligns the strength designation (Medium) with its narrative. More specifically, the narrative lists work-related activities that require a worker to perform lifts greater than 50 pounds, and, most probably, greater than 100 pounds. Specific examples in-

Table 3

*O*NET Descriptor for Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers*
 53-3032.00 - Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers

Drive a tractor-trailer combination or a truck with a capacity of at least 26,000 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW). May be required to unload truck. Requires commercial drivers' license.

Tasks

- Check vehicles to ensure that mechanical, safety, and emergency equipment is in good working order.
- Maneuver trucks into loading or unloading positions, following signals from loading crew and checking that vehicle and loading equipment are properly positioned.
- Collect delivery instructions from appropriate sources, verifying instructions and routes.
- Maintain logs of working hours or of vehicle service or repair status, following applicable state and federal regulations.
- Report vehicle defects, accidents, traffic violations, or damage to the vehicles.
- Secure cargo for transport, using ropes, blocks, chain, binders, or covers.
- Drive trucks to weigh stations before and after loading and along routes to document weights and to comply with state regulations.
- Drive trucks with capacities greater than 3 tons, including tractor-trailer combinations, to transport and deliver products, livestock, or other materials.
- Obtain receipts or signatures for delivered goods and collect payment for services when required.
- Inventory and inspect goods to be moved to determine quantities and conditions.

clude load and unload truck, performance of emergency roadside repairs, and positions blocks and tying down loads. Using ecologically-valid examples, a Truck Driver delivering frozen chicken to fast food restaurants must lift on a frequent to continuous basis 35 to 55 pound cases (load and unload truck); lifting demands to remove and replace a tire include the need to lift and manipulate tires greater than 200 pounds (performance of emergency repairs); and blocks may require lifts and manipulations of greater than 40 up to 75 pounds, while tie-down chains may weight greater than 100 pounds (positions blocks and tying down loads). As such, the forensic vocational rehabilitation consultant would offer an unsatisfactory assessment by designating the occupation of driving a truck as medium duty, without consideration of actual work duties, which may be beyond the medium duty designation offered by the DOT descriptor.

O*NET descriptors offer different presentations for Heavy and Light Truck Drivers. Descriptors for both Heavy and Light Truck Drivers are offered in Tables 2 and 3. When comparing the two descriptors, the main difference in the general description of job duties is truck capacity, with Light Truck Drivers delivering loads less than 26,000 pounds, and Heavy Truck Drivers delivering loads greater than 26,000 pounds. Related to lists of tasks performed, the descriptors are very similar, with the exception that Heavy Truck Drivers have a specific designation that they drive

trucks with capacities greater than 3 tons. Beyond the descriptors listed in Tables 2 and 3, information related to work values, tools, work environments, and other features are available through O*NET, offering the forensic rehabilitation consultants needed information to evaluate return-to-work parameters as a component of job placement assistance.

A forensic rehabilitation consultant, utilizing various descriptions when developing a profile for a worker with an injury or disability that drives a truck, must carefully evaluate their resources. As indicated previously, the DOT descriptor has outdated timeliness and discrepancies in its designation of actual job duties and strength demands. The vocational consultant must recognize that these descriptors offer a framework, not an absolute. Moreover, the vocational consultant must recognize, similar to any occupation, job duties will vary with individual employers and job duties. Accurate job descriptions or an understanding of actual duties would be best attained by using O*NET descriptors as an initial framework, and then using information from the Truck Driver themselves, the pre-injury employer, incumbents presently working in similar positions, or all of the previously-mentioned resources to assure clarity, related to job duties.

Examining Occupation of Driving a Truck

Driving a truck is a complex occupation, demanding not only specialized training, but also requires a variety of cognitive demands, physical requirements and personal temperaments. These components will be addressed in the following narrative. Again, as addressed previously, it must be noted that these features vary according to not only individual employers, but also specific transportation and loading demands.

Training Demands and Consideration of Skill Levels

Regulations regarding the necessary training for Truck Drivers and issuance of commercial truck driving licenses requirements vary not only state-to-state, but also across country borders, rendering qualifications both a national and international political issue (Horn & Tardif, 1999). Vocational consultants would be advised to consider not only their individual state regulations, but also accompanying states, in which a driver may operate, as these regulations may ultimately affect employability. Generally, Truck Drivers must pass a qualifying exam offered through a state driver's license bureau. Prior to being eligible to take the qualifying exam, an applicant must have previously completed a vocational-technical program, generally offered through either a private-pay educational facility, or a state-sponsored program, such as a vocational-technical school. The length of these programs may vary, ranging from less than three weeks to greater than two months. Typically, these programs will offer both classroom-based training, and an experiential component, requiring several hours of on-the-road driving time. Upon completion of the training program, the Truck Driver will be issued a certificate of completion, which will enable the Driver to both take the licensing exam through the licensure bureau, and also complete the actual driving test. The licensing exam may be offered through written/computer format, or may be given verbally/orally, if an applicant lacks academic skills to complete the exam. Concurrently, or prior to being able to take the licensing exam, Drivers must pass a physical exam, requiring signature and approval by a physician, typically an occupational medicine physician (Hartenbaum, Caughron, Hegmann, & Zondag, 2003). Some states may give allowances or release of requirements for Truck Drivers, enabling applicants to bypass formal training, if Drivers have documented on-the-road or military-based experiences. Moreover, states may also offer allowances for seasonal agricultural-based transportation of raw and processed products. Ultimately, while individual states may have licensing standards, these standards may vary, based on experiences of the Truckers themselves, and type of transported product.

Whether the occupation of driving a truck falls within a skilled, semi-skilled, or skilled capacity, would vary, of course, depending on both the needed skills and training of the Driver, and type of product distributed. Unskilled work, characteristically, requires minimal or no judgment, and can normally be learned in less than a month. If a Driver would not be required to complete any formal training, and, moreover, not mandated to gain work skills, such as knowledge of new routes or ongoing regulations, then a vocational consultant would be proper to define this specific Driver as unskilled. Potential examples may include Drivers delivering stone or gravel; Hot-Shot Drivers delivering light loads along designated routes; or Logging Drivers, not requiring use of heavy equipment, such as pickers. Semi-skilled work entails possession of job-specific skills, necessitates some degree of completion of complex job functions, and also encompasses someone to not only remain alert, but also pay attention to detail or assessment of risks. Most Truck Drivers would fall within this category, as driving on the road requires workers to maintain alertness and pay attention to road conditions, and concurrently maintain awareness of driving regulations. While standard references generally describes truck driving as semi-skilled, based on descriptors (i.e., O*NET, DOT, *Guide for Occupational Exploration*), an argument may be strongly presented that Truck Drivers delivering hazardous loads (Hazardous Waste Drivers), or working a complex route (i.e., UPS and Federal Express Drivers) perform work duties justifiably typified as skilled work. Skilled work requires additional training time, beyond time stereotypically required of unskilled or semi-skilled duty; these position require more training times, higher educational attainment, and abstract thinking. While truck driving does not require attainment of a high degree, several positions require not only additional certifications (i.e. hazardous materials certification), but also training, typified of drivers delivering hazardous materials, or other specialized deliveries. If the vocational counselor potentially assesses that a Driver may be a skilled worker, the counselor must document not only specialized training, but also cognitive demands and abstract thinking required to complete daily tasks. Assessment of driver-related skill levels must be completed by vocational consultants to evaluate not only transferable skills, but also post-injury employment options in consideration of whether a Truck Driver with disability may return-to-work in various scenarios along the vocational hierarchy.

Cognitive Demands

The primary cognitive demand for Truck Drivers is sustained attention (Pollatsek, Fisher, & Pradhan, 2006), or maintaining attention for long periods of time with minimal or no opportunity to redirect attentional demands. Research has well-documented

the relationship between fatigue and sustained attention associated with driving long distances (Gander, Marshall, James, & LeQuesne, 2006; Kecklunk & Torbjorn, 1993), demonstrating that sustained attention results in remarked fatigue even after short periods of time. Accurate-sustained attention must be maintained not only for the safety and preservation of the load and Truck Driver, but also safety of other drivers (Drory, 1985). After maximum medical recovery is reached, vocational consultant may further consider not only fatigue management, but also training to improve self-monitoring among Truck Drivers returning to the workforce following injury, particularly if the Driver may be deconditioned (Fournier, Montreuil, & Brun, 2007).

In addition to sustained attention, divided attention tasks are completed by Truck Drivers (Atchley & Chan, 2011), affecting cognitive demands and fatigue, in addition to ongoing distractors to reduce boredom, such as listening to music or watching movies while driving. Truck Drivers must communicate with not only other truckers to evaluate road conditions, weather, and additional hazards, but also home-based dispatcher. Prospectively, frequency of divided attention tasks dedicated to communication varies according to time of day, type of load, weather conditions, among others. In addition, workload and driver fatigue may be affected by number of needed stops (Crum & Morrow, 2002). Truck Drivers may vary related to number of stops, with stops varying from once or twice daily (petroleum or oversize loads) to 10 or greater stops (food or retail delivery), requiring diversion from main road, multiple redirections related to paths, and the need to communicate with those receiving drop offs (see Bausch, Brown, & Ronen, 1995 for a discussion). Work hours also affect cognitive demands, especially if sleep patterns are disturbed (Gillberg, Kecklun, & Akerstedt, 2003; Santos et al., 2004).

The number of maximum hours that a Trucker Driver may work varies on a state-to-state basis and internationally (see Jensen & Dahl, 2009 for a discussion of truck drivers' hours of service and occupational health). Commonly, Truck Drivers work a 10-hour day, in which a Driver is directly driving on the road. Allocations may be made related to time delays due to drop offs, breaks, or other stoppages. However, anecdotally, as Truck Drivers are often paid either by the mile or number of deliveries, propensity or willingness to work beyond a 10-hour-day may be motivated by financial gain. When evaluating cognitive demands linked to driving, one must also consider the prospect that drivers may work a variety of work hours (Einstein & Iyer, 1997). Drivers delivering retail products may work traditional business hours, dropping off goods during an 8-hour shift, and then returning home upon completion of a shift. Others may complete cross-country hauls, working 10-hour shifts

over several days. Others may complete shorter hauls, less than 5 hours each way, but may complete more than one or two hauls within a 24-hour period. As demonstrated, work hours may indeed vary, depending on employer needs. If a Truck Driver has restrictions related to work hours or sustained positioning, the forensic consultant must evaluate whether work hours are consistent, further enabling or disabling a worker from completing identified task demands.

Educational or Academic Aptitudes

Multiple arguments may be presented related to both theoretical and actual academic demands pertaining to driving a truck. Similar to many service-based occupations, workers and incumbents may vary greatly related to educational attainment, ranging from less than a high school degree to prospectively post-secondary education. Truck Drivers, at a minimum, must have rudimentary reading skills, to assess directions via street names or road maps. However, it may be difficult to assess literacy by this one component, as some drivers may work within areas that are known by past memory, in which written directions are not needed. While lading tickets may vary in their complexity, the forensic consultant must evaluate if lading tickets are read by receivers of the goods, or the driver, or, perhaps, neither. Receipt and distribution of a lading ticket would be in isolation a poor indication of reading skills. Particularly, if alternative job options are considered, the forensic consultant would be better apt in direct or cross-examination to testify about educational aptitude based on tested abilities, as opposed to assumptions that the ability to distribute lading tickets reflects on specific literacy levels.

Physical Demands

Physical demands of driving a truck are diverse. The task of driving requires sustaining positioning, fluctuating from less than an hour (retail drop offs) to greater than 5-6 hours (long hauls). While driving, torque manipulation demands may also be wide, involving manipulation of steering wheel, along with gear shifts. Truck Drivers must also walk up and down various steps. As the numbers of steps to access a larger rig are typically three to five steps, additional steps may include those on loading docks and entrances into offices. Drivers may also be required to connect hoses, requiring push and pull of different physical demands. Lastly, the tasks of tarping must be further considered. Tarping involves covering a load and then strapping down the tarp to assure a load is secure. Multiple tarping techniques may be employed by a Truck Driver, requiring different requirements related to strength and range of motion.

Reasonable and Expected Wages for Truck Drivers

When evaluating reasonable and expected wages for Truck Drivers, in addition to using O*NET and Internet-based references, vocational consultants must, of course, utilize standard resources when evaluating past wages, such as employer-based and tax records. Wages vary among Truck Drivers, with the discrepancy due to tasks performed (loads), type of ownership, and actual compliance with on-the-road regulations (Richardson, 2001). Wages may also be affected by whether a Trucker is union or non-union (see Hirsch, 1993 for a discussion related to wage differentiations according to whether a Driver belongs to a union). Mileage rates vary by type of load delivered, with wider loads and long-distance loads traditionally offering greater rates than in-town and less-than-maximum capacity loads. Ownership status may also affect wages (see Nickerson & Silverman, 2003 for a discussion of benefits and costs of asset ownership for Truck Drivers). Owner-operators both own set their own schedules and own their trucks or rigs, affecting both productivity and income (Corsi & Grim, 1987, 1989; Hart & Moore, 1990; Hubbard, 1998). Mileage rates typically are greater for owner-operators; however, one must consider, similarly, expenses are greater for this scenario. Moreover, considering drivers are paid either by mileage, or number of stops, admittedly, drivers that comply with regulations standards will be paid less than those that fail to comply with noted standards (see Rodriguez, Targa, & Belzer, for a discussion of this issue). Tables 4 and 5 represent wages for various heavy and light truck-driving positions from information derived from O*NET. As shown in the referenced tables, wages vary greatly among drivers with minimum and advanced experience. Legal and ethical considerations must be evaluated whether to include or exclude non-reported wages, when evaluating loss of wages and wage earning capacity. Anecdotally, voca-

tional counselors must recognize that very often Truck Drivers report multiple expenses, often resulting in reduced or negligible net wages. Legal precedence has outlined guidelines for evaluating wage expectations and wage losses for Truck Drivers; however, this discussion is beyond the scope of the present article. Vocational consultants and forensic economists must be advised to consider this reality when developing an opinion about wage losses for Truck Drivers, in addition to the aforementioned factors.

Evaluating Return-to-Work Options for Truck Drivers with Injuries

Most, if not all states, require that Truck Drivers meet both cognitive and physical standards. Driving a truck requires multiple physical demands, including, but not limited to walking up steps, walking on uneven terrains, tarping and tying down loads, and repairing loads. Designation by a Physical or Occupational Therapist on a Functional Capacity Evaluation, or an Occupational Medicine Doctor on a physical evaluation that a worker may perform sedentary, light, medium, or heavy duty work does not, and would not in solitude, dictate that a physician would or would not approve a worker to perform duties as a Truck Driver. Factors such as mobility, range of motion, endurance, and strength all affect approval. Furthermore, whether an individual has been prescribed or takes medications would also influence approval. Prior to recommending that driving a truck may be a vocational option post-accident, a vocational counselor would be advised to attain review and approval from a physician that a Truck Driver with a disability would be medically released to drive a commercial, heavy truck.

Table 4
*O*NET Wages for Light Truck or Delivery Service Driver*

Location	Pay Period	10%	25%	2010 Median	75%	90%
United States	Hourly	\$8.54	\$10.37	\$13.77	\$18.79	\$26.37
	Yearly	\$17,800	\$21,600	\$28,600	\$39,100	\$54,800
Louisiana	Hourly	\$8.11	\$9.57	\$12.67	\$17.49	\$24.84
	Yearly	\$16,900	\$19,900	\$26,400	\$36,400	\$51,700

Source: Department of Labor. (n.d.). Light Truck or Delivery Service Drivers. Louisiana. Retrieved on June 25, 2012, from http://www.careerinfonet.org/occ_rep.asp?optstatus=011000000&soccode=533033&id=1&nodeid=2&stfips=22&search=Go

Table 5
*O*NET Wages for Heavy Truck or Delivery Driver*

Location	Pay Period	10%	25%	2010 Median	75%	90%
United States	Hourly	\$11.89	\$14.55	\$18.16	\$22.56	\$27.64
	Yearly	\$24,700	\$30,300	\$37,800	\$46,900	\$57,500
Louisiana	Hourly	\$11.73	\$13.62	\$16.60	\$21.47	\$26.84
	Yearly	\$24,400	\$28,300	\$34,500	\$44,700	\$55,800

Source: Department of Labor. (n.d.). Light Truck or Delivery Service Drivers. Louisiana. Retrieved on June 25, 2012, from http://www.careerinfonet.org/occ_rep.asp?optstatus=011000000&soccode=533033&id=1&nodeid=2&stfips=22&search=Go

Return-to-Work with Same Employer in Same Position

Obviously, after either a work-related accident, or accident occurring outside of the workplace, in which the Truck Driver had an accident, received medical and rehabilitation care, and then, later release to full duty as a Truck Driver, both the employer and Truck Driver must evaluate whether this is an employment option. If the accident occurred during the course and scope of employment, the employer, assuming the employer viewed both viewed the employee as a valuable pre-accident employee and accident as legitimate, may be willing, or, perhaps, excited about returning a tenured employee to the workforce in their same position. However, if the accident occurred outside of the course and scope of employment and the employer did not value the Truck Driver highly prior to or following the accident, then the employer may be hesitant or unwilling to accept the employee following maximum medical recovery and/or work release. As a precursor to this evaluation, the vocational counselor must evaluate if the Truck Driver would be able to obtain work release as a Truck Driver. If the pre-injury employer would be willing to rehire the rehabilitated Truck Driver, then it would be recommended for the vocational counselor to obtain a job analysis with specific job duties, including walking and tarpping duties, to assure job duties outside of those specifically outlined in a respective department of motor vehicle department's requirements are met related to post-accident work restrictions. It would be incorrect to assume that attainment of just an Occupational Medicine Physician's release would render a Truck Driver immediately employable either with same employer or another employer as a Truck Driver. Job duties outside of those listed or addressed in a department of motor vehicle department's requirements may be within or outside of a Truck Driver's general work restrictions, requiring the vocational counselor to evaluate this question further.

Return-to-Work with Same Employer in Modified Duty

Trucking companies may be diverse by producing, shipping, and selling via retail or wholesale a specific product, or range of products, moreover, hiring a range of employees. Or, in contrast a pre-accident employer may be limited to dispatching trucks. In the former scenario, a vocational consultant may consider if the employer would be willing to offer modified duty in another position. After obtaining work restrictions and a job analysis for a specific position, the vocational counselor may then solicit review and approval on behalf by a physician for a modified duty position. The vocational consultant furthermore has a professional duty to follow-up with the employer and injured worker to assure that the requested, performed duties comply with the job analysis. If job duties change, the vocational counselor must modify the job analysis and seek approval from the physician to assure that the position does not fall beyond prescribed work restrictions. Similarly, the vocational counselor may evaluate if training or retraining options are available with an employer to determine if skills may be enhanced for an injured worker, enabling attainment of a position maximizing not only transferable skills, but also post-injury wages.

Return-to-Work in Open Labor Market

Previously, research has specifically outlined criteria for initiating job prospects, identifying employers, and placing workers with disabilities in the open labor market. Furthermore, legal precedence has established guidelines for quality and sham rehabilitation. Vocational counselors must initially identify the purpose and function of either job placement or labor market surveys for Truck Drivers post-accident. Initiation of career exploration for the purpose of specifically and successfully placing a rehabilitated Truck Driver, or, in fact, any worker, in the open labor mar-

ket is significantly different that completing a labor market survey to establish expected post-injury wage for the sole purpose of reducing indemnity benefits. Truck Drivers, may, prospectively, require work adjustment and career counseling to not only obtain, but also maintain post-injury employment. While Career Development Specialists (non-degreed persons completing labor market surveys) may initially identify open jobs in the labor market, the vocational rehabilitation counselor themselves must directly follow-up with the prospective employer to assure the job is appropriate for the Truck Driver post-accident, and also personally complete any respective job analysis, as the Career Development Specialist without specialized training in vocational rehabilitation would lack the necessary skills to either complete a job analysis for any identified position, or solicit feedback from a physician about the appropriateness from a work-restriction standpoint. The vocational rehabilitation counselor would be encouraged to identify a range of vocational options for the injured Truck Driver post-accident, if job placement in the open labor market is considered. If only unskilled, minimum wage positions are identified in the open labor market, the vocational counselor via report or dialogue with injured worker, insurance adjuster, attorney, physician, or others may be obligated to develop an opinion whether a worker would be limited to minimum wage employment permanently post-injury, or retraining, reeducation, or other actions may increase vocational placement options.

Retraining

As with any post-injury occupational consideration, retraining options must be evaluated in relation to education, training, work restrictions and place ability following retraining. GED, vocational-technical, or even collegiate training may be possible options. Academic testing, as a component of the vocational evaluation, would assist the vocational counselor, attorney(s), and worker with disability to evaluate retraining prospects. The vocational counselor must be cautioned to equate that a Truck Driver with a CDL has academic preparation equivalent to a high school degree. While states do require that a CDL pass a test as part of their licensure, the vocational counselor must recognize that Truck Drivers may pass the written test without assistance, pass the written test with assistance, pass a verbal test without assistance, or pass a verbal test with assistance. Each of the scenarios offer insight into demonstrated academic preparation. Louisiana regulations allow a Driver applicant to take the test via computer module or verbally. Anecdotally and via feedback from Truck Drivers with disabilities, motor vehicle licensure bureau personnel may offer assistance with not only reading the applicable questions, but also comprehending and answering individual questions, rendering the test in solo a

poor measure of academic aptitude, furthermore, a poor measure of retraining capability.

Retraining options may be evaluated in relation to worker interests and local economic trends. As an example, the author once set up a Truck Driver to pursue and complete an electrician vocational-technical and apprenticeship training program following an accident. The injured worker's community had recently acquired a new employer that set up and built manufactured homes for the oilfield industry, rendering the availability of several electrician positions in the small, rural community. While the worker was released to light work duty, disabling him from working in a traditional electrician position, this specific employer had position wherein job duties could be modified, wherein, the position would allow an individual to perform duties within scripted work restrictions. Alternatively, a second Truck Driver with a disability was retrained to assemble jewelry, or perform a sedentary occupation, based on shortage of a local jewelry manufacturer of stone setters. As such, when developing retraining options, vocational consultants should consider job placement and place ability with specific employers, as opposed to limited, theoretical labor markets, rendering job placement tenable following retraining.

Self-Employment

Truck Drivers, dependent on specific job-related tasks, education, and transferable skills may, or may not, possess specific skills that may enable self-employment post-accident, rendering the vocational consultant to evaluate this vocational option on a case-by-case basis. Employment settings vary, related to independence offered to individual Truck Drivers by their employers, with current efforts dedicated toward increasing self-management and independence of individual Truck Drivers (Hickman & Geller, 2005). Some employers are set up allowing Truck Drivers to be owner-operators, while other employers require their employees to adhere to a time clock and are paid hourly wages (Nickerson & Silverman, 2003). Assuming that all Truck Drivers are able to set up and start their own business post-injury with the conjecture that they are able to hire employees, set up personnel procedures, attain customers, development bookkeeping procedures, etc., would be presumptuous. However, a percentage of Truck Drivers, may, indeed, possess these skills, wherein, perhaps with a sedentary, light, or medium duty work release may be able to manage and dispatch other drivers, without driving themselves. Of course, consideration must be taken to evaluate not only gross revenue when calculating post-injury wage earning capacity, but also expenses. Beyond personal fortitude, other factors, such as deregulation, technology, and access to other Drivers and support personnel may affect the feasibility of

self-employment for Truck Drivers (see Bellman & Monaco, 2001). While management of a trucking company may be most-commonly related to a related occupation for Truck Drivers with disabilities, other self-employment avenues may also be explored based on vocational interests and transferable skills.

Conclusions

As demonstrated in the present article, the profession of driving a truck is more dynamic, than static. That is, while commodities themselves transform to meet public needs and strategies to transport goods also become modified with ongoing regulations, the profession of driving a truck will also revolve. Any forensic rehabilitation consultant, completing an assessment of employability for a Truck Driver with a disability, must recognize that while the DOT and O*NET offer a foundation of understanding essential job duties, these references have limitations, particularly related to timeliness of descriptors and physical demand levels. As such, the vocational consultant must conduct additional vocational research via interviews, labor market surveys, literature reviews, and other mechanisms to fully evaluate not only physical demands for a specified Truck Driver, but also training, education, values, temperaments, and other work-related factors to adequately evaluate post-accident employability. Furthermore, regarding wage loss and loss of wage earning capacity, the vocational counselor must evaluate both present wages, but also loss of vocational prospects if a Truck Driver had the occasion to gain access to driving position requiring not only additional skills, but also warranting greater pay or compensation. While the past vocational rehabilitation literature has primarily ignored job placement considerations for Truck Drivers with disabilities, it is hopeful that the present article will prompt additional commentaries and research efforts to further explore the challenges related to successfully placing Truck Drivers whose vital job is the transportation of goods and commodities, further ensuring and promoting a viable economy.

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