

# FIRST GEAR

## NEW DRIVER NEWSLETTER

Presented by



AUGUST 2020



## Time Management in Trucking

By Jeff Clark

Late deliveries and missed appointments are great ways to lose business. Drivers need to manage their time. Keep that left door shut, plan your stops, and make them as infrequent as possible. The less often you stop the less time and fuel you will waste.

When you do stop make sure you take the time to do more than one thing. You have to take a 30-minute break within 8 hours, or you can't drive again. This may be a good time to eat your lunch – with a fork. Take a walk and get moving as this will help to not only maintain your health but help to get you out of the truck for a brief period and get some fresh air. Time that break between 5.5 and 8 hours into your day.

*As a driver, you are expected to work long, hard hours. Don't be out messing around during your 10-hour break.*

Taking a 10-minute break, and then having to stop again an hour later for your 30 is wasteful. It does not matter if you oppose the 30-minute rule, you still have to take it. That doesn't mean that you have to sit there and look at the clock for 20, make good use of your time. Take a shower even if you don't think need one. Believe me, you probably do.

Sleep at your customers whenever possible, they may actually come and get you before your scheduled appointment.

There are more 14-hour violations than 11 hour drive time operations. Once you start that clock, it doesn't stop. Consider an 8/2 split. It avoids the need for a 30-minute break. I have heard drivers complain about needing a nap during the day. Don't drive tired. Although, when I budget my time properly and get a good night's sleep during my 10-hour break, I have found no issues running to the end of my 14. As a driver, you are expected to work long, hard hours. Don't be out messing around during your 10-hour break, wind down, and get some sleep. I have found that if I look at my computer after my 14 and at the beginning of my 10, it takes me longer to fall asleep. Therefore, if I only have time for a 10, I don't look at it until the morning. Sometimes, I will heat up a chamomile tea as it helps me sleep better. Sleep and being well-rested matters, so think of what ways will help you relax and fall asleep. When you are working 14 hour days, your life on the road becomes work and sleep. Manage it! ●



*Jeff, a member of the RoadPro Pro Driver Council, worked his way through college as a forklift driver during the day and went to college at night earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree with an accounting concentration. The job market for a "night school" accountant was a tough one at the time and Jeff got what was supposed to be a temporary job driving a truck. That was 32 years ago. He applied what he learned in college to how he ran his business and in 2012 he was asked to join Freightliner's Team Run Smart playing a key role in the introduction of the 2018 Freightliner Cascadia. After retiring his role at Freightliner he now has a dedicated route with Paper Transport that keeps him closer to home allowing him more time to spend with his wife Roxanne, his dog Gracie and their 11 grandchildren.*



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A YouTube video player interface. The video title is "Dezl OTR GPS". The video content shows three overlapping screens of the Garmin Dezl OTR GPS navigation system. The top screen shows a route on "South Kansas Tpke" with a "4% Steep Descent Ahead" warning. The middle screen shows a "Straight Truck" route with a "Select" button. The bottom screen shows a route to "95th Street" with a speed of "63 m/h" and an arrival time of "12:38". A red play button is centered over the screens. In the top right corner of the video player, there are "Watch later" and "Share" buttons. At the bottom left, there is a "Watch on YouTube" button. The text "Dēzl™ TRUCK NAVIGATORS" is displayed at the bottom center of the video player.



## The Importance of a Pre-Trip Inspection

By Kim McDonnell, Manager, Customer Experience, RoadPro Family of Brands

Think you don't have to perform a pre-trip inspection every time you hit the road? If you think because your truck is new or your company takes care of your truck and you don't have to worry about it – NOT SO FAST!



Pre-trip inspections are first and foremost for YOUR safety – and also for those that are on the road with you. It is very dangerous to go out on the road with a possible issue that could have been caught on the thirty minutes or so it will take to make sure everything is working properly. Making sure that you check that all belts and hoses are secure, brakes are in good shape and your load is secured means that you arrive at your destination in good shape and so will your truck. It could also save hours lost if you break down by the side of the road with something that could have been detected long before you even headed out.

Don't develop a bad habit of not conducting a pre-trip inspection because you think that nothing has ever gone wrong before or that you have a new truck and assume nothing can go wrong. You are setting yourself up for a false sense of security and also taking a chance that you may regret by putting your life or someone else's in danger.

Not only that – It is the law!

*Pre-trip inspections can also uncover minor issues that could lead to major ones if not checked.*

You are required by law to ensure your vehicle is safe to operate by performing a pre-trip inspection and logging that you have done so by completing a driver vehicle inspection report. If you find any issues, document them on the report and catch them before a DOT inspector does! This will help avoid a violation or a costly fine. Keep in mind if the DOT catches something that is wrong with your truck that you overlooked it could mean taking your vehicle out of service until the issue is resolved.

Pre-trip inspections can also uncover minor issues that could lead to major ones if not checked. It will cost less to uncover something minor early and fix it as soon as you are aware of it before it turns into a bigger problem. Early discovery of a problem can also avoid an accident in which you could not only hurt yourself but others.

Not only keep adequate records of your pre-trip inspections but all the repairs that were done as a result. Log the date that the issue was discovered as well as when the repair was made. This can be a lifesaver if you are involved in an accident and the others involved are trying to prove you were negligent in the care of your truck or claims that is what caused the accident.

If you already don't have a good checklist developed for your pre-trip inspection we found many out there with a simple search of the Internet as well as from many trucking companies and trucking experts.



The basics include:

- Check all your belts and hoses for tightness and wear - looking for leaks or cracks.
- Check all fluids in your truck – oil, coolant, power steering fluid, windshield fluid, etc.
- Check all external lights and reflectors inside and outside of your truck – brake lights, emergency flashers, turn signals, headlights, or any other lighting that you have on the truck.
- Check your tires and tire pressure, make sure there are no cuts, cracks, missing chunks, unusual bulges, tread separation, damage to the rims, or even debris between the dual tires.
- Check your brakes, brake chambers, brake hoses, and brake drums and do an air brake check.

A pre-trip inspection can be a lifesaver –don't take it for granted. It could save you time, money, and your life - Be safe out there! ●



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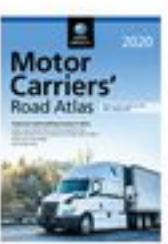
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## Power It Up

Now more than ever the over-the-road life of the trucker is about being safe, self-reliant, and self-contained. With the outbreak of COVID 19 many drivers found their favorite restaurants closed and food options and other amenities limited. Truckers needed to provide for themselves and that meant making that hot meal or brewing that morning cup of coffee in their truck. It also became very important to keep devices charged and powered in order to have a safe and secure trip.

While being able to recharge your smartphone at the end of your day was a must, having enough power for your laptop, tablet, and other devices while also being able to cook a meal became a necessity.

Many who may not have had a power inverter in their truck in the past because they were able to find a hot meal, a cool beverage or a charging station at any of their stops, decided now was the time to purchase a power inverter to keep everything they needed to be powered up and ready to go.

Power inverters became a lifesaver and if you have one you already know it and if you don't and are considering purchasing one soon here are a few frequently asked questions that we thought we would share:



### Why is there a spark when cables are connected?

A: When connecting your inverter's cables, a slight spark will occur. This is normal. The spark indicates that the capacitors on the circuit board are charging.



### Why is the voltage measured with a voltmeter only 95 volts?

A: A standard voltmeter measures the peaks and valleys of the sine wave output. On a modified sine wave inverter, the peaks and valleys are flatter, resulting in a lower voltage. We suggest using an RMS voltmeter, this will show the actual voltage.



### Why is there a voltage drop using high watt devices?

A: When powering high watt devices on your inverter, you may experience a voltage drop. This drop can occur if the engine is not running and under a heavy load or when the cable is too small for the power draw.



### Can an inverter be wired into a transfer switch for house or RV use?

A: Wiring an inverter into a transfer switch is not recommended as it will short the circuit breaker and damage the inverter.



### Can an inverter be used on a solar cell charger/battery system?

A: PowerDrive power inverters can be powered on any 12-volt battery system. They are also perfect for off the grid renewable power sources if they are not being tied into the power grid or house wiring. Keep in mind, some solar panel systems charge on a higher voltage.



### Inverter flashes red and green, what's wrong?

A: Power inverters have three LEDs: red, yellow, and green. The inverter will constantly rotate the display between voltage and power usage, this is normal.



### Why is there no power from the plugs?

A: If your inverter has no power from the outlets, this could mean there is a fault in the inverter or damage on the circuit board. We suggest resetting the inverter by disconnecting the positive cable and pressing down on the power button for 20 seconds. Wait another 2 minutes, then reconnect the cable and test.



### Why is there a buzzing sound coming from the inverter?

A: The buzzing sound given off by the inverter is an alarm, this goes off if the voltage has dropped below 12 volts. If this happens, you should adjust your cables and fuse accordingly.



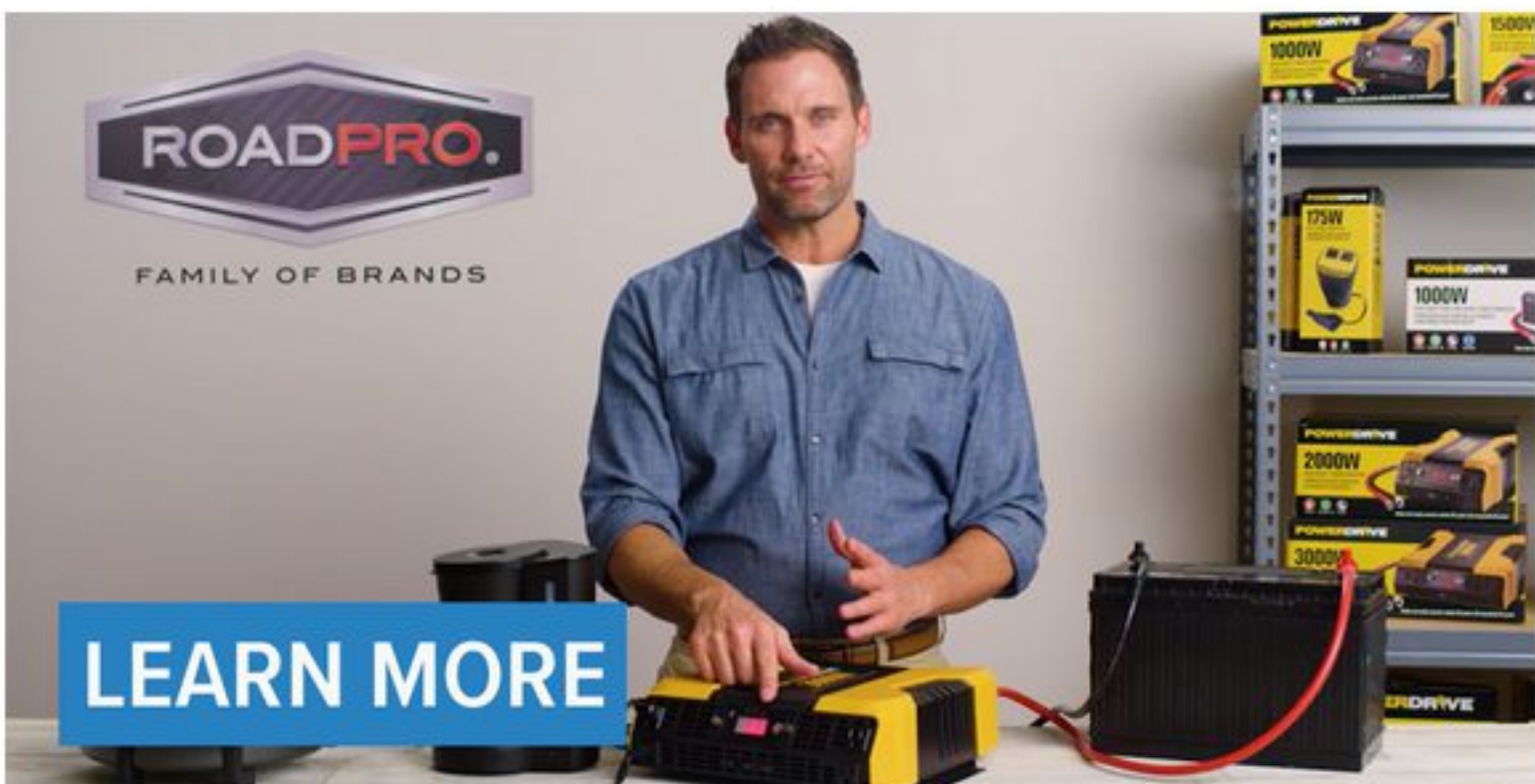
### How do I reset my inverter?

A: To reset your inverter, start by disconnecting the positive cable. Then, press and hold the ON button for 20 seconds. Wait two minutes, then reconnect to power.



### Why doesn't the Bluetooth connect?

A: When using the PowerDrive app, your inverter will not automatically connect. To pair your inverter for the first time, you will need to disconnect all other Bluetooth items from your phone. These can be reconnected after pairing.



Remember, it is always recommended that you have a power inverter professionally installed but if you chose to install it on your own please make sure to thoroughly review the owner's manual and instructions. Also, make sure to check out our How-To series on power inverters found on our website under the [Video Library](#) tab. ●

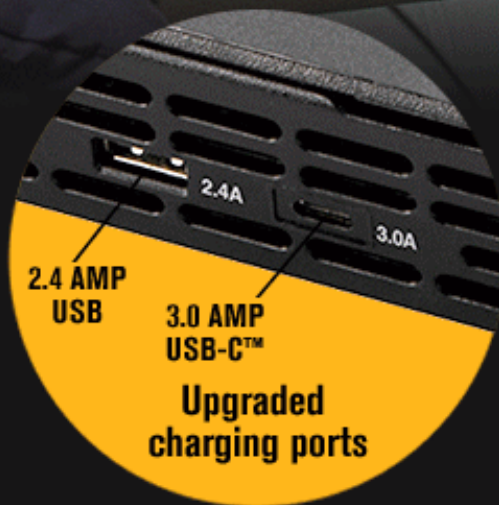


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## Learning to Live in the Truck

By Craig Daniels

You went to a school and/or someone taught you how to drive a class A truck. You went out with a trainer who fine-tuned your inadequacies into making you a safe driver. You paid attention and know the FMCSRs, HOS, and CSA point system inside and out. Things like that take time and effort but as with any professional pilot, football, or baseball player, your first year in the “Big Leagues” is intimidating, to say the least. Learn the rules, do the hard work and things will all come together.

But one of the things that you probably were never taught was how to care for yourself in this new environment. Things that we did in our previous life that didn't require thought now almost seem like Herculean tasks. This is, after all, a new way of life and you must learn to embrace it if you are to be successful at it.

*We are in this to make money not spend it.*

Daily tasks that seem so trivial, bathrooms with a sink and shower, and kitchens with refrigerators and stoves. Brushing teeth, maintaining personal hygiene, preparation, and cooking of food are major parts of being healthy out on the road.

Lack of proper dental hygiene will not only create a bad case of halitosis but also could lead to heart problems and other dental problems. While using the bathroom at the truck stop or travel center to brush your teeth if a shower is not available is an option, it is much more sanitary to do it in your truck.

If you are stopped at a rest area, a shipper or receiver, or parked in a flat spot on the side of the road these things are still needed and face it, keeping this routine up just makes you feel better about yourself and improves your attitude. Think of it as an extended camping trip. Make a simple sink from a large 2 1/2 gallon rectangular disposable water bottle. You can also use this sink to wash your dishes as you learn to cook as well. When you are done, take it to the back of the truck and dump the water out into the grass. Not only is this more time friendly but in this day and age of COVID-19, you will have less chance to expose yourself to others.

*Don't treat this as an extended vacation where you eat anything and everything along the way.*

Cooking can be a challenge as well. COVID-19 caught a lot of people off guard. While some had a few snacks on board they weren't able to sustain themselves for an extended period of time without buying a prepared meal. Others were prepared for this purely as a way of life. This does not mean you need a power inverter or APU with a plethora of cooking appliances. It is easier for sure but not required. A simple thermoelectric cooler and an inexpensive 12-volt appliance like the RoadPro portable oven that most of us call the lunch box. This will go a long way to not only providing independence and safety but can save you some serious money as well. We are in this to make money not spend it. Don't treat this as an extended vacation where you eat anything and everything along the way. I myself have gained a lot of weight to date from doing this very thing. Sure, it is fun to be somewhat of a “foodie” and experience different foods from different parts of the country but be warned it is costly in both your money and your health.

It is more expensive to buy precooked meats and items that only need slight refrigeration versus fresh meats and veggies that need a freezer but this is still a much cheaper way to live than spending \$20+ a day on meals. The lunchbox oven can be used to actually cook full-blown meals with a little imagination and getting advice from Facebook pages like “Cooking on the Truck”. Some drivers have even made these groups for their own companies where the groups might be smaller and have better information about company policies as to what is and what isn't allowed to be used to cook with. As you grow in knowledge RoadPro has a slow cooker that can be used to make full-on stews or roasts that can cook while you drive. Loading these up during your 30-minute break and letting them cook for the last 4-5 hours of driving can be rewarding when you stop to the pleasant aroma of “Mom's pot roast” that is not only done, but you don't have to stand in line for it and you know what is in it. These things are very important to control your intake of not only calories but ingredients that might not be as healthy.

Microwaves are fine but these require pre-packaged food items that are not near as healthy as making it yourself. When you do your time and upgrade to a truck that has a freezer, an inverter or APU why not use a George Foreman grill or panini press instead? The higher cooking temperatures make the addition of fresh meats a serious option to cut costs and give you healthier choices.

Cooking odors (and others) can be reduced by cleaning your truck down with wipes once in a while and bringing in an automatic room spritzer or air freshener. Place them in a spot where the spray will be effective but not spraying on you while you're driving. I place the one I have in a cup holder with a paper towel wrapped around it. Carpet also keeps the dust down and it feels better and warmer on bare feet than a rubber mat.

Use your imagination. Think outside the box and ask for help. Not only in your driving habits but also for life habits. Learn what works for you and embrace the change. ●



*Craig “10-ring” Daniels has been driving for Crete/Shaffer/Hunt for the last seven years. Daniels is an Army veteran who went into heavy equipment repair after serving and that led to almost twenty years of building roads by running asphalt plants, rock quarries, and paving crews. He tried his hand at his own business as a subcontractor but when the economy tanked in '09 he started driving truck. In what he calls divine intervention he has been lead to help and guide others along the way and has trained and mentored other drivers for Crete/Shaffer/Hunt helping new members of the family with policies and procedures unique to the company. He has been exposed to some special people that have taught and continue to teach him the ways of the force and is proud to call a few good friends who he values and takes their knowledge to heart.*





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