

Healthy drivers are the backbone of the road transport sector. As an employer, there's a lot you can do to encourage your drivers to keep healthy. You'll be protecting your own business, and helping to secure the future of the industry as a whole!

Fit for the Road addresses concerns about driver health

In recent years, concerns have been raised about the increasing number of heavy vehicle drivers experiencing health problems, including obesity and heart disease. These problems have forced many drivers to leave the industry.

The Log Transport Safety Council and ACC therefore got together to discuss possible solutions – which led to the development of 'Fit for the Road', a one-year driver health and wellness programme.

How did Fit for the Road work?

Fit for the Road was a programme based around monthly activities with a health and safety focus. Logtruck Drivers from across NZ took part. Monthly activities included health checks, 'weigh-ins', quit smoking programmes, nutritional and cooking advice, keeping a 'food diary', exercise-based activities, social sports, Christmas and Easter 'survival guides' and more.

What can you learn from Fit for the Road?

Although participants in Fit for the Road were drawn from around New Zealand, the programme (or a similar set of activities based on it) could easily be run within your company. We recently commissioned TERNZ (Transport Engineering Research NZ Ltd) to produce a report on the programme and help us assess its success. Their findings can help you tailor a similar programme for your company.

What did participants have to say?

Shane Huntley

"I decided it was time to improve my lifestyle so I could enjoy my children more. My approach was 'do a little bit every day' – that way it was easier on the body. I started cycling, found a new passion in running, and with the help of my wife we gave the pantry a makeover - out went the packets of chips, and in went the fruit. I feel really good for doing it, and have lost weight and stopped smoking."

Shamos Hunter

"I wanted to get fitter myself, and motivate others on the programme too. If any of the boys needed someone to train with, I was there and ready to go for a run or whatever they wanted to do. I found how important it is to mix things up – if my mates were getting a bit bored I'd suggest something different, like a mountain bike ride, to get everyone interested again. It's not easy keeping fit and eating healthy all the time – pies can be tempting - but with support you can do it, and you'll feel a lot better for it."

Tips for things to include in your driver health and wellbeing programme

- Health checks – these can be arranged on-site or through a local GP
- Goal-setting – encourage staff to set fitness goals, and identify activities that will help them achieve their goals, as well as any barriers they may need to be overcome along the way
- Exercise programmes – a good place to start is ACC's ActiveSmart website, which offers free, individually-tailored, online training and fitness advice
- Web forum – where drivers can post comments and support each other online

- Food diary – this is a great way to keep tabs with what you're really eating
- Quit smoking – drivers can be encouraged to call and register with 'The Quit Line' – patches and gum can be provided for support
- Weigh ins – this enables weight loss to be charted over time
- Breakfast challenges – encourage/remind staff to have a healthy breakfast every day.

These are just some starters. Get in touch if you want some more ideas and help.

How to find out more

For more information about Fit for the Road and how you can adopt a similar programme at your workplace, visit logtruck.co.nz

For further information on healthy eating see the ACC's "Better fuel, better performance" resource. Visit acc.co.nz/publications and search for ACC4309.

For information on ACC's online personal training solution activesmart.co.nz