

FIRST GEAR

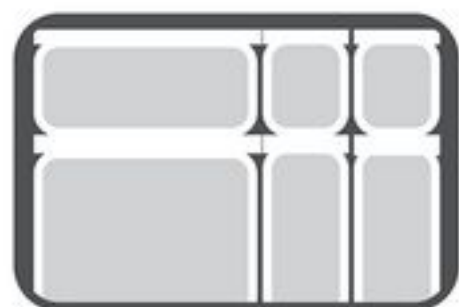
NEW DRIVER NEWSLETTER

Presented by



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Get Organized



Storage Tips Every Trucker Needs to Know

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

When you live within the confines of a truck cab it can be difficult to find space for all of the essentials you need. We recently reached out to veteran driver Linda Caffee, who drives team with her husband Bob, and asked her to provide a few tips on how she stays organized. We compiled a list of the top tips she shared.



Use clear containers to store food

Food will remain fresh for a longer period of time and you can easily see what is inside eliminating rummaging through items to look for what you want.

Reuse sanitizing wipe containers or other containers with lids

Repurposing containers you purchase that have lids to store pens, office supplies, and power cords. They are also great for those plastic grocery store bags that can be reused as trash bags.



Fireproof and Waterproof Lock Box

One of the most important things to have on your truck is a lockbox that is both fireproof and waterproof. Making sure you have a place to store important documents, as well as spare cash, could be a lifesaver in the event of a truck fire or if you happen to be in an accident and those documents are exposed to the elements. Knowing where they are and that they are protected can save the day.



Multi-purpose your Microwave

The microwave can be a perfect place to store plates, bowls, silverware and paper products.



Collapsible bowls and accessories

You will find a large offering of collapsible bowls, measuring cups and other cooking essentials that will save space and are easy to store.

Stackable Clear Storage Containers

In addition to having clear containers for food items it is also a good idea to have them for the additional items that you store in your truck— this way you can easily see the contents of each container and they can be stacked to keep things neat and tidy.

Stackable wire shelving

Make the most of the shelving you may already have in your truck and use stackable wire shelving to create more storage.



Slimline Hangers

Utilize slimline hangers that can hold both shirts and pants and take up less space. Many brands have non slip fabric on them that will also keep your clothes from falling on the floor. Having the same type of hanger that does not take up additional space will help you easily organize your wardrobe.



Storage for the Fridge and Freezer

Don't use hard containers but rather sandwich or freezer bags to store your food. Many brands are microwave safe enabling you to heat the food in the bag and then dispose of it for easy cleanup. In the freezer, stack frozen items like you would on a bookshelf.

Items will take up less space and you will not have additional storage containers to find a place for after you use the contents. Also, utilize koozies for glass bottles to prevent those items from rattling as you travel down the road. Buy those dollar store spring loaded curtain rods to put across the freezer and fridge to keep items from falling on the floor when you open the door or that may have shifted during drive time.

Storing extra blankets and more

Fold extra blankets longwise and put them under the mattress. You can also store your window shade under the mattress.



Hooks

Having hooks in various locations throughout the truck whether the removable kind or something more permanent will help keep things like coats, jackets, hats, and backpacks off of the floor and neat and tidy.



Seat Organizers

These types of organizers hang over the back of your seat or the front and are great to keep documents, maps, or paperwork that you want easy access to.

5 Gallon Buckets

This is a great way to store items that you are currently not using like extra clothing, seasonal coats or non-perishable food items. They store nicely under your bunk and save space.

What are your storage hacks to keep your cab organized? Share your tips with our Brake Time community. Check it out at www.braketime.com. ■





12-Volt Cooking Saves the Day

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

By now, we are all very aware that COVID-19 impacted a truck driver's ability to find a hot meal at most truck stops or travel centers when they stopped for the day, let alone a hot shower, access to clean restrooms and nothing on that roller grill to choose from. Open restaurants offered take out only and most of the time they were closed well before most were able to end their day. You may have been able to find fast food – but those places also had limited hours and after all how many cheeseburgers or subs can someone eat in a week?

Many truck drivers who have always prepared their meals in the truck were pretty much unscathed by the closings as long as they could get the groceries they needed to cook. Many were blessed to have a fridge in their truck and access to AC power to plug in their cooking appliances. But for those that did not, they at first thought there were no alternatives, however, soon discovered that there were! Not only were drivers able to find a full line up of 12-volt cooking appliances at travel centers and truck stops, but they could also find an offering of 12-volt coolers too. Allowing the opportunity to not only cook a meal but also keep food and drinks cool while traveling down the road without the need for ice – which also became limited.



RoadPro 12-Volt Appliances

For those drivers who never entertained the idea of cooking for themselves and typically relied on what they found at their next stop, they soon discovered how simple it was and even more flavorful and fun to prepare a meal in their cab. Many of them posted pictures of their creations on social media utilizing 12-volt appliances like RoadPro's portable stove, roaster, or slow-cooker.

Recipe resources on social media such as Cooking On The Truck and Big Trucks Cooking saw an increase of subscribers boom in a matter of days and provided some great options on what drivers could prepare using simple ingredients that could be found easily at their next stop.

Many will tell you that 12-volt cooking has really saved the day!

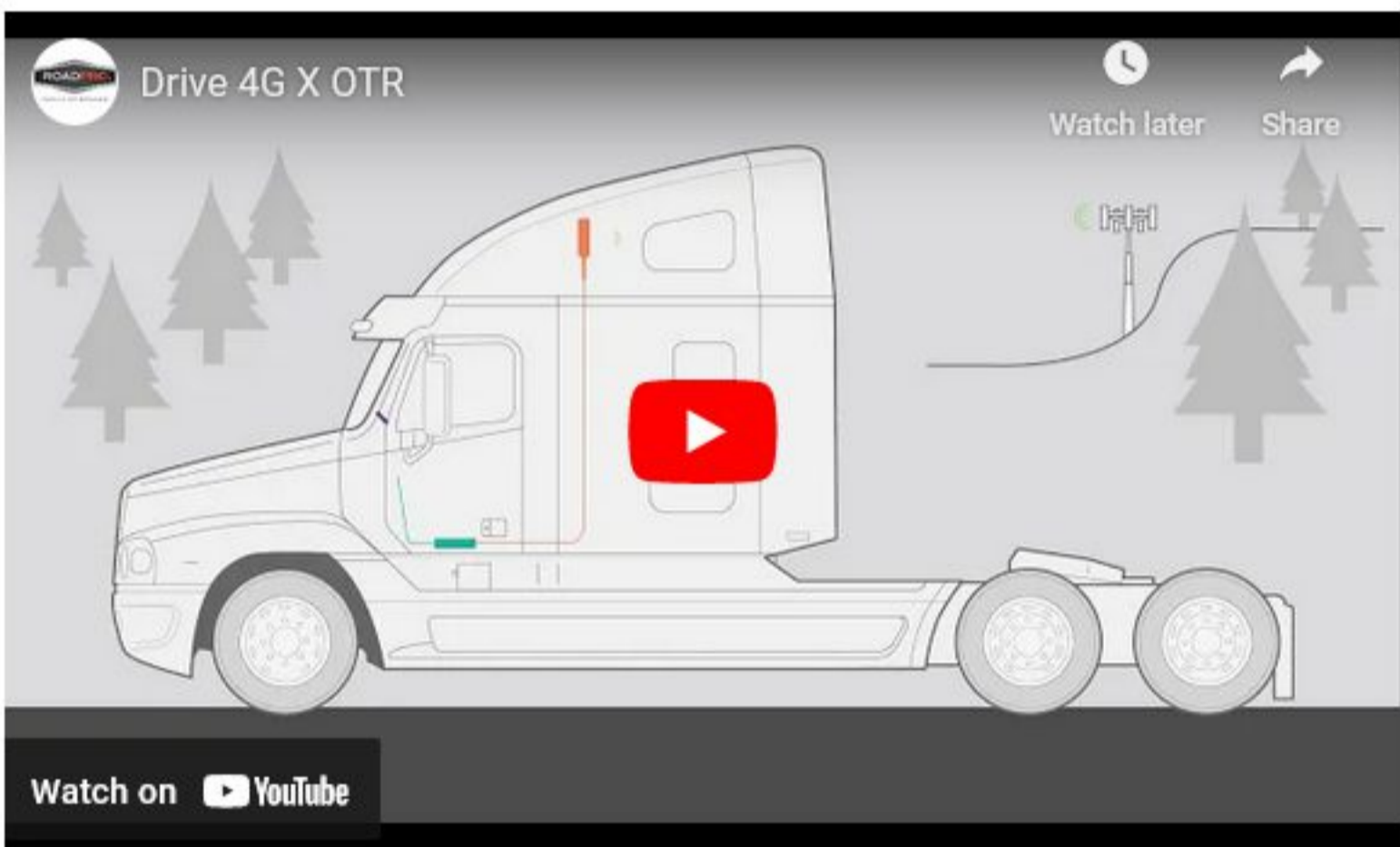
Truck drivers like Al and Jenn Kohl, who have been driving together for over 10 years but have combined experience of 50 years in the trucking industry, have been cooking in their truck for most of their careers. At the beginning of the pandemic when they saw many truckers not being able to find food in the truck stops and travel centers, they decided to step up buying RoadPro's 12-volt portable stove or 12-volt roaster and distributing to other truckers in need. They even provided some helpful tips to other drivers on how easy and convenient it could be to cook in the cab, even sharing some of their food staples to get them started.

As we roll into summer, travel centers and truck stops are now trying to provide more food options for drivers. However, the initial shut down of the nation which created limited food options and availability of essentials have taught truck drivers one thing – the need to be prepared and to have alternative means to provide for themselves. Truckers who have never considered cooking in the cab, have now discovered how convenient it can be and also how it can not only save money but help with maintaining a healthy lifestyle when you know what is actually in the food that you eat. Many will tell you that 12-volt cooking has really saved the day!





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3 Tips to Reduce Back Pain While Driving

By Hope Zvara yoga & lifestyle expert, CEO of Mother Trucker Yoga

To think that the idea of the open road may have at first have meant a new journey, a new opportunity, seeing the countryside, and living as one of the original “cowboys”. Except you and I both know that this movie in our heads left out one critical scene...BACK PAIN!

Back pain does not need to be a life sentence.

Sitting in the same position for long periods can trigger a laundry list of issues in the body, but the number one is back pain. For some medication is their go-to for the pain. But if you are a truck driver, then you should find a different route. A recent study discussed that those who are frequently exposed to vibration are two times more likely to have back pain and suffer from sciatica.

Back pain does not need to be a life sentence. And most certainly does not need to leave you feeling like a victim in your own body. The following three tips are three of my go-to strategies and solutions that when done correctly and regularly can help leave back pain in the dust.

Understanding posture is number one in my book when it comes to fixing what feels broken when it comes to the body.

1. Posture 101



Most seats in vehicles (truck or not) are clearly not designed for actual humans. And although there are seats you can no buy to help absorb the vibration more effectively, when it comes to posture it seems very few have figured it out. Your spine is in an “S” curve to help absorb impact when you run, jump, skip, and even drive. But when you sit and the seat begins to mold your spine to look more like a “C” that natural shock absorber begins to no longer do its job.

Understanding posture is number one in my book when it comes to fixing what feels broken when it comes to the body. Next time you are in the truck notice if your lower back rounds in towards the seat and your tailbone tips towards the front of the truck. Now, this may not be the case when you start driving. But by the end of the day, you may find yourself completely sunk into the seat behind you.

Let’s think of our pelvis like a glass of water. Tip the water one way and the water spills out. Tip it the other way and the same thing happens. When you get ready to ride, take 30 seconds, and check your pelvis, does it feel upright. Do my front hip bones feel like they are upright and facing forward, or do they feel sunken into my belly? This may make you feel like your back is now arched. But in your spine is now just sitting in what we call neutral-where it should be. And once you discover this, it is a smart idea to invest in a support that will help keep your spine in that position. A small investment like this could save you thousands of dollars in doctor bills and time off work due to back pain and disabling sciatica.

2. Use Cruise Control



When and if you can, use cruise control. When your cruise is set you can place both of your feet flat on the floor of your truck which will help you sit upright and evenly. When your foot is constantly on the gas it shifts your hips and torques your pelvis. Do these eight-plus hours a day every day and you have yourself a pain in the butt. And while you are using cruise consider doing ankle rolls, lift and lower your legs all to help improve circulation and keep lymph moving. This will help avoid swelling and stiffness when you step out of the truck.

3. Stretch It Out & Ice It Down



Now no need to go out and buy yoga pants. But it is necessary, especially as we age and if we find ourselves not moving as much as we should be during the day. If all day while driving you never move, and then when it’s time to unload you are expected to move abruptly and at extreme speed or lifting, you can bet your bottom dollar there are going to be consequences in the form of pain.

How about while driving you to practice pelvic tilting. While sitting, when you inhale try to arch your back like there is a pin behind your lower back. And as you exhale work to press the pin to the seat behind you with your lower back. All your pelvis to tip when you do this, and maybe even get your upper back involved. This simple motion can save your back a lot of stress and discomfort that could have been avoided if you were to just move a little bit more.

And when you are parked for the night and are feeling the pain, consider adding ice. When things are inflamed and aggravated you want to ice that area. 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off.

When driving is what you do it’s vital that you seek out ways that you can continue to do that and do it pain-free. Whether you have been driving for fifty years, five years or five months for many drivers back pain is real and often lurking in the shadows each time it comes time to drive.

So next time you step up into your truck remember these three tricks to help leave back pain in the dust.



Hope is a yoga, movement and lifestyle expert who is also a nationally recognized speaker and best-selling author and is the CEO of Mother Trucker Yoga®. She also hosts radio show titles “A Daily Dose of Hope” and focuses on the well-being of truck drivers implementing programs that speak to both the body and mind. Providing drivers with a more fulfilling lifestyle by improving their health, mobility and mental point of view. For more information visit www.MotherTruckerYoga.com

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Portable Power to the Rescue

By David Hollis, Editor, Truckers News

Today more than ever, the over-the-road life of the American trucker is about being safe, self-reliant, and self-contained. But, it's also about staying well informed and well connected no matter where you are. Fortunately, there are numerous devices to make both of those possible. Smartphones. GPS. Bluetooth headsets. Laptops. Gaming consoles. Tablets. Kitchen appliances.

But, all those things that provide sought after creature comforts need to be powered and/or recharged. Doing that is easier today thanks to an array of devices to keep you properly provisioned with power. **And, in today's sometimes uncertain trucking environment, having portable power at your fingertips can mean the difference between a safe and secure trip and one you'll regret.**

Power Inverters: For When You Need More Power More Often

Recharging your smartphone at the end of the day is one thing. Having enough power to work on your laptop while you cook dinner and watch TV in your truck is something else indeed.



That's why they make power inverters. Think of them as multi-purpose power stations that convert your truck's 12 volts of DC power into AC power that can be used to power appliances. They have AC outlets and USB ports to recharge any device you might have, including your portable power bank.

Before you buy an inverter for your truck, be sure to know how much power you need. Check to see the wattage your inverter provides is enough to cover the demands of the devices/appliances you plan on plugging into it. Add up your device wattages, and then add on 10% to 20% to the total for peace of mind. (Check your devices' manuals to see how many watts they draw.)

Most inverters come with features to keep you and your truck safe. These include alarms and automatic shut-off triggers, as well as an appropriately-sized fuse to protect the system. (You may wish to consult with your mechanic about proper installation. Also, if you're a company driver, check to be sure you can have an inverter installed on your own. More and more companies are specing trucks to have inverters.)



The RoadPro Family of Brands' PowerDrive makes an array of power inverters that wire directly into your trucks' electrical system. They come in various sizes: 400, 1,000, 1,500, 2,000 and 3,000 watts. PowerDrive also delivers numerous smaller inverters that plug into your truck's 12-volt power port. So does MobileSpec.

Inverters by both have USB and AC ports and range from 20 to 300 watts.

Once you decide on an appropriately sized inverter you wish to wire into your truck, be sure to purchase cables that are up to the task. Be sure they are long enough and the proper gauge to handle the current you require. And, don't hesitate to ask your trusted repair technician or mechanic for help and advice before you start connecting things.

You need to be sure the power bank you buy exceeds the needs of your device or you'll be disappointed when you are stuck without a full charge on your phone.

Portable Power Banks: No Need for Truck Stop Outlets Again

That trusty Android smartphone that is never out of arm's reach as you drive or when you're resting may be your faithful communications assistant, but it has an insatiable appetite for juice, the electrical kind. Fortunately, there's a vast array of portable power packs — batteries with charging ports really — available to feed even the hungriest device. Just be sure you get one that meets your needs.

The capacity of any portable power bank is rated in milliamp-hours (mAh). Devices are similarly rated, so you need to be sure the power bank you buy exceeds the needs of your device or you'll be disappointed when you are stuck without a full charge on your phone.



The market is awash in portable power banks. They range from modest ones with a USB and USB-C™ ports that will recharge your smartphone in a few hours to 50,000mAh units with six ports. MobileSpec delivers a pair of portable power banks. One's rated at 5,000mAh and the other at 20,000mAh. Both have USB and USB-C ports and will refill your phone properly.

Fast Chargers For When You're In A Hurry

Fast charging allows you to refill your devices quickly, saving you time and worry. It does so by safely increasing the amount of current sent to the battery in your device, reducing the time it takes to recharge it. Fast chargers can refill your devices three times as fast as a normal charge.

There are a slew of fast charging devices to choose from, including many that will work well in your truck.

Before you buy an inverter for your truck, be sure to know how much power you need.

MobileSpec and RoadKing offer an array of chargers that plug into your truck's 12-volt port. Most are 18-watt, have both USB and USB-C ports, can accommodate fast charging, and are compatible with all devices. Likewise, you have many to choose from when shopping for a fast charger you can plug into a wall socket at home, in a hotel or a truck stop. And, the good news is that none is too expensive: a good one can be had for under \$20.



The other essential part of any fast charge solution is getting the juice to your smartphone. Not every charge/sync cable is up to that task. Cords that feed more power from the electrical outlet to your device must be heavier, stronger, and made of stouter stuff. The first thing you will notice is that most cords made for fast charging are thicker, and that's good. The MobileSpec MBS06900 and MBS06903 both have USB-C™ to Lightning tips and are a convenient 6 feet long. Both are rated for 18 watts. RoadKing's RK06934/35/36/37 cables are also rated for 18 watts, heavy-duty, and ideal for trucking use.

It's also possible to quickly charge your phone with no cord at all.

It's also possible to quickly charge your phone with no cord at all. More and more smartphones are being built to accommodate wireless charging. All you do is place your phone on a wireless pad and the Qi charger does the rest. It's also possible to use wireless chargers with older phones with the addition of a small pad or case — but rather inexpensive — that connects to the phone's charger port.



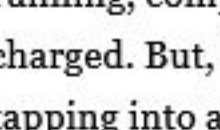
MobileSpec's universal Qi mobile wireless charging mount features an automatic sensor that keeps your phone secure and allows for one-hand operation. The Fast Charge 10W mount is compatible with Apple, Samsung, Motorola, LG, and other Qi-enabled smartphones. The non-slip rubberized coating also keeps your phone secure.



RoadKing makes a heavy-duty universal charging pad for Qi-enabled smartphones that has a non-slip rubberized coating that keeps devices secure. Compatible with iPhone X, 8, 8+, Samsung, Note 8 and 9, S8, S8+, S7, and other Qi-enabled devices.

In addition, RAVPower makes both a wireless charger with a stand for your phone to rest in and a smaller, less expensive round pad. Both are highly-rated and accommodate a variety of phones. Tech giant Anker also makes similar wireless chargers — standing and round pads — that do the job and about half the price of the ones from RAVPower.

From inverters to fast chargers, today there are enough options to keep appliances running, computers humming and smartphones and other devices fully and properly charged. But, before you purchase and plug things in, be sure the power supplies your tapping into are compatible with your devices and appliances and safe for your truck and you.



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