

Prevention and care: TRATON hosts Drivers' Health Day at the IAA

What can truckmakers do for drivers, what health risks are involved, and how do they receive assistance in an emergency: these were the questions at the heart of the debate at the Drivers' Health Day hosted by TRATON.

Munich / Hanover, September 25, 2018 – Christina Scheib knows just how hot it can get in a truck. She can often be found driving her 40-ton dump truck around her home state of Bavaria transporting the grim, bubbling mixture of bitumen and grainy stones that will later be used to pave the road. And as a woman behind the wheel of a truck, she has found that “it is not enough to give 100%, you have to give 200% to be recognized.” The “trucker princess,” as she has been dubbed by the media, is a trained medical assistant. This makes Christina Scheib an ideal guest at the Drivers' Health Day hosted by TRATON in Hall 12 at the IAA.

Four issues came up straight away at the forum presented by commercial vehicle journalist and industry expert Werner Bicker: where truck driver cabs are heading, what should be borne in mind when sitting and sleeping – and how the DocStop initiative helps those who need medical assistance far from home.

Traffic, stress, and time pressure are things that Christina Scheib knows all too well from her day-to-day work. Alexander Teleki, who is responsible for product planning at MAN, showed how a truckmaker can make life behind the wheel easier in the form of future cab concepts. Describing the prospects for the cabs to come, he explained that they would be “more custom-built than ever,” specifying: “We will see a stark distinction between short- and long-distance transportation.”

The IAA saw MAN unveil its vision for taking specific urban conditions into account in the form of its new MAN CitE concept. This city truck has very little in common with the conventional concepts of today. Electric drive, low access, and a sitting position at eye level with pedestrians and cyclists coupled with cameras instead of mirrors and a continuous level floor inside as well as a sliding door instead of a space-filling swing door on the right-hand side: this offers many benefits compared with today's conventional solutions.

Alexander Teleki's take on long-distance transportation is different. He lists “automated driving, connectivity, and high safety requirements” as issues that have to be considered when developing future driver cabs for long distances. When taking about automated driving, we often talk about secondary activities that the driver could be doing instead of driving. It is this very issue that Teleki and his team have studied, and they have found that “without any visual contact with the road, test persons in the driving truck almost never felt nauseous,” which is exactly what was to be expected.

However, Alexander Teleki points out that “the concentration of the test subjects during the secondary activity left a lot to be desired.” He concludes that one of the most important developments in the truck cabin of tomorrow is that the length of the driver cab can be expected to grow in coming years.

New regulations on the table in Brussels regarding truck dimensions will make this possible and will be welcomed by the second speaker at the TRATON Drivers’ Health Day: sleep researcher Birgit Hoffmann-Castendiek from Hanover Medical School. “80 centimeters wide” is the width required of a bed that she considers the minimum for a bed in which people can ideally sleep. “Everyone turns often in their sleep,” she says, “and they need the space to do so.” Scania already offers beds that are 80 centimeters and 100 centimeters wide, for instance.

Birgit Hoffmann-Carstendiek shed light on the major importance of correct sleep in many respects. The medical expert started by explaining that there is no single solution as people are different. There are early birds and night owls. And there is no single answer to the question of how much sleep a person needs: “Many people can survive on around six hours,” she said commenting on current research findings, “while others need more than nine hours.”

However, her opinion on the issue of tiredness as a problem that affects many drivers is clear: “Neither coffee, nor opening a window helps,” she explains loud and clearly, “only a break does.” Research facts dramatically highlight the importance of breaks. After four hours without a break, the risk of an accident doubles. After six hours without a break, the risk of an accident is already eight times more likely.

Yet there is one type of fatigue that no breaks help. The doctor describes the phenomenon that is often underestimated but is especially dangerous for truck and bus drivers as “involuntary fatigue.” It can be a sign of sleep apnea which robs the rested of sleep. Being overweight is a common cause of this condition, which is often accompanied by irregular snoring at night and more or less marked fatigue during the day.

This particular type of lethargy increases the risk of an accident by the individuals concerned significantly. “The risk for those affected by this condition is two to seven times higher,” says Birgit Hoffmann-Castendiek. The sleep researcher continues: “There are different types of treatment through to CPAP therapy, as it is known, in which a ventilator reproduces restful sleep.” Fears that this kind of treatment could end a driver’s career are unfounded, says the expert: “If you use the mask for at least four hours 70% of nights, you are considered fit to drive,” she says describing the legal situation. And she says that “it can be used in a truck no problem.”

Then there is the sitting: “40 percent of drivers have back problems,” says physiotherapist Carola Lachenmayer, addressing another health risk that drivers are particularly prone to. Driving is now done sitting down although constant standing is “the healthiest body posture,” according to the expert. It is

therefore especially important for drivers to ensure that they are sitting correctly. This includes: “Tilting the pelvis a little forward, ensuring that the thighs are well supported and correctly setting the lumbar support while making sure that the seat is well inclined.” She strongly recommends being kind on the back and doing something more during the breaks: exercises that are simple to carry out with an elastic band which she demonstrated on the spot in the truck.

In the case of symptoms that suddenly arise such as toothache or a trapped sciatic nerve, there is almost no other profession that has as much trouble obtaining medical care as drivers. Parking a 40-ton truck in a city barely bears thinking about. And there are no doctors or clinics anywhere to be found where you can park a 40-ton truck.

The TRATON event saw two major participants of the DocStop initiative explain how they tackle this problem. Founder Rainer Bernickel is a former highway police officer who says that he often noticed this medical care dilemma facing drivers when he was serving. As a result, he developed the DocStop concept after going into retirement. He appealed to doctors to help in medical journals and met with great response: “Quite a few medical experts worked as truck drivers themselves while pursuing their studies.” Doc Stop now has network of around 750 practices and clinics in Germany.

Hauler Joachim Fehrenkötter is DocStop’s Chairman and the concept of the initiative won him over, like many of his fellow entrepreneurs: “DocStop helps us if a driver is on the road and is suddenly taken ill – so we need to support DocStop.” If the driver reports a need for medical attention (via a hotline, the app, or a social network), a shuttle service is put in place to one of the DocStop practices or clinics which have all committed to one thing — to treat these patients immediately.

“Most cases simply involve the medication that the driver needs to be able to drive on,” says Joachim Fehrenkötter outlining the typical nature of DocStop use, which is available to all drivers. Bernickel puts the number of cases that DocStop has been able to help in this way since it was established at “4,000 through 5,000.”

“The DocStop initiative is still too little known,” acknowledges founder Bernickel commenting on the potential for improving DocStop. “Welcome to the network” says Joachim Fehrenkötter, as “trucker princess” Christina Scheib spontaneously agrees to be a DocStop ambassador.

Contact:



Julia Kroeber-Riel

Head of Group Communications & Governmental Relations

TRATON AG
Dachauer Str. 641
80995 Munich, Germany

Tel. +49 152 58870900
julia.kroeber-riel@traton.com



Dr. Alexander Baer

Trade Media Relations

TRATON AG
Dachauer Str. 641
80995 Munich, Germany

Tel.: +49 152 58867423
alexander.baer@traton.com
www.traton.com

TRATON

G R O U P

TRATON AG, formerly Volkswagen Truck & Bus AG, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Volkswagen AG and a leading commercial vehicle manufacturer worldwide with its brands MAN, Scania, Volkswagen Caminhões e Ônibus, and RIO. In 2017, the TRATON GROUP's brands sold around 205,000 vehicles in total. Its product range includes light commercial vehicles, trucks, and buses that are manufactured at 31 sites in 17 countries. The Company had a workforce of around 81,000 worldwide across its commercial vehicle brands as of December 31, 2017. The Group seeks to transform the transportation system through its products, its services, and as a partner for its customers.

