

# TRUCK TALK

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## Medicated Driving

As drivers and operators of transportation vehicles, we have been known to possibly over contribute to our employment by coming to work with cold or flu symptoms – not feeling GREAT but certainly not feeling bad enough to stay home and shirk the responsibilities of our job. So, we take a couple of (you fill in the blank here with your favorite cold medication) and attempt to do our job. And, usually this works out just fine. But in an identifiable number of cases, not necessarily.

As an example, let's take the case of Diphenhydramine, a common antihistamine which is found in cold and flu, allergy and sleeping medications. This medication is great for treating allergy symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing and sleeplessness. However, in many people, this medication and other antihistamines can cause many unwanted side effects, even at the recommended doses. The person can become disoriented, confused or worse yet sleepy, which is NOT a desirable characteristic in a person operating any vehicle!

A sure sign that we're all getting older is the amount and type of medications we routinely take – both over the counter and prescription. The phenomenal growth of the pharmaceutical industry is testament that as a nation, we are taking more prescription and over the counter medications than ever before. At this point, not a lot of consideration is being given to the consequences of mixing these preparations. In many cases, it's possible that the combination of medications that are taken (prescription and over the counter) can combine to create an overdose situation, or at least a situation where the drug interaction overshadows the desired result. As an informed person, it is your obligation to be knowledgeable about any and all interactions among both prescription and non-prescription medications. Certainly the interaction of

prescription medications can be (and should ALWAYS be) evaluated by your physician. In addition, it only makes good sense to check for possible drug interactions – and in this electronic age it's not all that complicated! The web site <http://www.drugs.com> has an interactive checking system which is easily understood and user friendly. It allows the user to input all medications that are currently prescribed and will check for interactions.

At the present time, the highway transportation industry does not have any regulations regarding the use of prescription and/or over the counter medications by those in safety sensitive functions. The aviation industry does have a list of prohibited (grounding) medications which in the majority of cases requires a 24 hour period for the substances to be flushed from the system. Primarily these drugs are those which contain sedating antihistamines in addition to a decongestant. It is important to note that one of the seven BASICS in CSA 2010 is Fatigued Driving. It is quite possible that the effects of an over-the-counter or prescription medicine that is quite legal to possess and use might erroneously lead enforcement officials to think you are fatigued when in reality you are not.

If there is a bottom line to this subject it would be CHECK!!!! Read the instructions that come with an over the counter medication that you are purchasing. CHECK with your physician or pharmacist for possible interaction of prescription medications. We as individuals can help to prevent medication interactions (and medication side effects) which can interfere with our ability to perform safety sensitive functions. And self checking and prevention is certainly much more workable than a long list of regulations – we already have enough of those!

[ispain@cwings.com](mailto:ispain@cwings.com) • [jschenker@cwings.com](mailto:jschenker@cwings.com) • [jmercer@cwings.com](mailto:jmercer@cwings.com) • [ckovachevich@cwings.com](mailto:ckovachevich@cwings.com)

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