

45-year career driver offering 'Truckercise' in-cab fitness DVD

By Dorothy Cox, The Trucker Staff

CARL'S CORNER, Texas — FedEx Freight driver Joe Martin is hoping a 12-minute DVD can help turn truckers from flabby and sickly into fit and feeling fine.

A fit 65 himself, Martin has come up with a regimen of exercises that can be done while sitting (parked not driving) behind the wheel in the cab of an 18-wheeler.

He's fond of asking, "Did you know the truck you're driving has a built-in fitness center?"

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He had a driver's seat and steering wheel all set up and was showing how his exercises, a blend of isometrics, resistance exercises (with free weights), extremity shakes and stands (going from sitting in the driver's seat to standing nearly full height) can be done right in the cab — all while the truck is parked safely, of course.

"Finally, a regimen of exercise specifically for truckers," he said.

Martin, a 45-year career trucker, began doing some exercises 20 years ago sitting in his Kenworth and has been developing them ever since.

Because he does so many repetitions of the exercises he actually gets some cardiovascular results. Other exercises he does, such as wiggling his toes and pointing his feet heel-to-toe and then toe-to-heel, are good for restoring the circulation when one has been sitting for a long time.

The exercises are also good stress relievers, he noted.

The DVD is endorsed by cardiologist Dr. Valentina Ugolini and Vickie Burr, an orientation instructor for C.R. England's driving school in Dallas.

"Just wanted to let you know," wrote Burr, "... Part of my class covers health and wellness. I stress the importance of eating well and proper exercise for professional truck drivers. After the lecture portion of my class (where I stress the importance of reading labels and limiting your sodium intake) I pop in your DVD." She went on to say that the DVD is popular in all her classes.

What Burr didn't say was that part of the popularity might be because truckers like watching the young blonde who does the exercises, Carrie Rush.

Rush, said Martin, is a personal trainer who agreed to demonstrate the exercise routine while he narrated.

After watching the video we tried a few of the standing-up-from-the-chair repetitions and using a big dictionary to take the place of free weights, we also did some of those. We were doing some heavy breathing from just those few exercises so it's not hard to imagine that doing 30 minutes worth of exercises in the cab, which Martin said he does, could actually be of benefit, not only to get the circulation going but to boost one's cardio rate.

"It's rigorous exercise once you work up to the proper number of repetitions," Martin said, adding that it's very important not to start out doing too many too soon.

"Add a little every week" and work up to the full routine, he cautioned.

He said Ugolini is actually the heart doctor for his wife, Carol, and that he had given the doctor a trial copy of the exercises to see what she thought and she agreed to do an endorsement.

Martin advises using the dumbbell weight of one's choice so long as it's not over 10 pounds, lest the trucker "knock out the windows in the truck."

He also said it's advantageous to hold in the stomach muscles while doing the isometrics.

Part of the routine entails shaking the legs and arms, which he said helps the trucker keep alert.

Even if one's cab has a lower roof, standing up in the seat just part of the way can still benefit the driver, he said.

Martin says it's "simple math" to add his routines to a healthy diet and proper rest to lower one's health care costs.

He hauls freight from Houston to Henderson, La., Monday through Friday and is home most nights and off on the weekends and he's currently trying to get his DVDs in truck stops. However, he said getting a distributorship has proved to be a hard nut to crack.

He's watching the DVDs grow slowly but steadily in popularity and believes "it's only a matter of time" before they become a household word, at least to truckers.

More about the DVDs are available at www.truckersise.net.

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