

Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH IN FOOD DELIVERY WORK ON PLATFORMS

 Laura Seppänen, Pia Perttula ja
Riikka Ruotsala

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What is learning in OSH?

- Takes place at work, either in training or induction, or in everyday work
- Learning is necessarily preventive! – experience can be too late (Lindberg et al., 2010)
- Learning is (or should be) in relation to safety risks in each work context

Features of food delivery platform work for OSH learning

- Food couriers in Finland (2025) are freelancers or self-employed -> no institutional employer obligations (insurances, salaried time-off, occupational health etc are on individual courier)
- Work is algorithmically managed
 - Paid by tasks (piece-rate) -> time pressure
- Work is lonely -> social support casual or weak
- Traffic and vehicle are major risks



Learning instances: Activity theoretical view of learning resources in the practical everyday work of food couriers

- Practice-based: Why, what and how do couriers learn in their practical everyday work? (Engeström, 2001)
- Learning is mediated (enabled) by differing **resources** stemming (Engeström 1987; Hobfoll, 1989; Kloetzer & Kloetzer, 2025; Ropponen et al., 2020)
 - from personal biographies,
 - from algorithmic practices of food delivery work, and
 - from the working environment (weather, traffic, restaurants, clients...)
- Instances of learning from eight qualitative interviews of food delivery workers on two platforms

Findings 1: Falling with a bicycle

Jakov: *I actually **fell off a bike**. I didn't hurt myself a lot. I mean, I could continue, and my bike needed a little repair, not so much. But then, I was looking like **how much am I earning** and that, and I decided not to do that anymore. (...)*

*And then, I realised that, if I actually hurt myself a bit stronger, or if I actually broke the bike or something completely, then, I mean, **I don't have any insurance, no sick leave, nothing**. So, I decided like, it's not worth...*

- Learning in accidents or near misses are reflected in combination with working conditions

Findings 2: Working long days

Ruben: *(I get tired) Because working more than eight hours is really hectic sometimes, but as I told, platform A didn't force me to work 10 hours a day. **It's my choice.** I thought okay because I'm not doing as usual nine to five job and being an independent contractor I have so much expenses.*

- The voluntariness here is Ruben's resource to explain and tolerate the working long days, with its psycho-social health and safety risks.

Findings 3: Why and what do couriers learn?

- Couriers learn mostly, because they need income
- Often, they learn the disadvantages of the food delivery platforms for couriering. Outcomes may be finishing courier work, bad feelings, mistrust or activism



Findings 4: possibilities and problems as resources for learning in five learning instances

1. Problems:

- Being confronted by both the working environment and risks, and the platform practices, rules and income
- By comparing their platform work to employment or to other platforms or alternatives (Immonen & Seppänen, 2025).

2. Possibilities:

- In some cases, couriers may enjoy couriating as a hobby, e.g. urban bicycling
- Justifications and actions for problems between platform practices and the reality

Discussion and conclusion

1. In safety learning, traffic and other risks are closely related to work contexts with their psychosocial factors
2. A brief safety training may be important, but does not appear in the learning instances of the analysed data
3. Problems, despite being negative experiences, can be learning resources for couriers to better understand their working condition, orient to their work in new ways, or take new actions (Seppänen, Toiviainen & Hasu, 2023).
4. The instances found can possibly be used as contextual and efficient learning tools in training.

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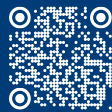
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