

Lean is a way of thinking that aims to improve productivity and reduce waste from the way we work. When used well, it can also help prevent strains and sprains by eliminating a lot of the risk that comes from extra clutter.

Here's one exercise that's ideal for a tradies van, based on the Lean method. It's called the Five S exercise and it was originally developed by Toyota based on five Japanese words starting with 's'. Doing this decluttering and organising exercise regularly can help you stay productive and pain free.

The Five S's are:

SORT (Seiri) Take out what's is not needed or used often.

SET IN ORDER (Seiton) Organise what's needed by identifying what you use most often, then neatly arranging things based on that.

SHINE (Seiso) Clean the van inside and out.

STANDARDISE (Seiketsu) Schedule regular cleaning and maintenance using the SORT, SET-IN ORDER and SHINE steps.

SUSTAIN (Shitsuke) Make Five S a way of life by forming a habit of following the first four s's on a regular basis.



HOW TO DO IT:

Take some photos of the current state of your van – it's great to be able to see your progress! Allow yourself some time and space to carry out the exercise. It helps to do this exercise close to your main storage area so that you can easily store away items you no longer need in your van. Crank up the radio.

Here are some things to consider for each step.

SORT:

- Do you have some containers to help keep similar items together?
- Have you removed broken gear and rubbish?
- Are you carrying around tools that you don't use often?
- Are hazardous items (eg, chemicals or sharps) separated and stored securely?

SET IN ORDER:

- Can you easily access items you use often like your toolbelt, toolkit or ladder?

- Are heavy items stored at waist height or below shoulder height?
- Are small parts easy to identify and are they labelled?
- Is there a logical order to how you load and unload items, such as unloading heavy items last?

SHINE:

- Are your tools clean and lubricated?
- Is the passenger area clean and clear?
- Have you checked your gear for defects and damage?

STANDARDIZE:

- Think about scheduling regular cleaning and maintenance using SORT, SET-IN ORDER and SHINE. Consider a note in your planner or an alert on your phone.

SUSTAIN:

- How can you make Five S a way of life by forming a habit?

