

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of April 17, 2017 – Fleet Safety

According to the Travelers Companies, Inc., fleet vehicle accidents are among the most costly of injury claims for businesses¹. The average cost of a loss related to vehicle accidents is approximately \$70,000. This is almost twice the cost of the average workplace injury, where current information places this figure at \$36,592.

This is why companies should consider a vehicular safety program within their overall corporate safety and health management system; sometimes referred to as a Fleet Safety program. These programs establish appropriate policies and procedures that are designed to help ensure a safe work environment for employees while protecting against liability from vehicle accidents.

Of course, even with a comprehensive fleet safety program, there are no guarantees that an accident will not happen. Let's remember that driving accidents are one of the most prominent misfortunes that can occur: work-related or otherwise. Whether driving in our personal vehicles or driving a company car or truck, maintaining driving safety is important as one wrong turn or a moment of distracted focus can result in a tragedy. And while many businesses focus on worker safety for typical work tasks, driving on our nations' roads seems, in many instances, to have been overlooked. According to the National Safety Council, last year (2016) was the deadliest year on US roads since 2007, where over 40,000 fatalities occurred; a 6% rise from 2015 and a 14% increase in deaths since 2014. This is the biggest two-year jump in more than five decades. Experts in driving safety have attributed lower gas prices and an increased motor-vehicle mileage combined with risky activities like speeding and driving while texting as the main reasons for this devastating increase.

So what can a company Fleet Safety Program do to help control accidents? Even a basic program, will establish formal policies that are designed to focus on employee screening to ensure drivers have an acceptable past performance. Other elements in a fleet safety program include testing (to ensure driver competence), vehicle inspection and maintenance (thus ensuring that company vehicles will operate safely) as well as training (so that there is an assurance that drivers know how to operate their specific vehicle or, equipment, such as a forklift, dump truck, flatbed, etc.): all essential elements of a company vehicle safety program.

For any company with a fleet of vehicles of any size, a formal fleet safety plan can provide a number of advantages, including improved safety, employee satisfaction and the potential to improved fleet efficiency.

An effective fleet safety program must be comprehensive, up-to-date and instituted as a part of a company's safety culture. It should be thorough, while being a positive influence for each employee who gets behind the wheel. In addition, as with all safety programs, to ensure success, there needs to be commitment from management. Here are a number of items that are necessary for an effective fleet safety program:

1. **Identifying all of your drivers.** Many businesses may not be aware of the full extent of their non-owned vehicle exposure. Every employee who drives on behalf of the business, even those employees that use personal and/or rented vehicles, needs to be identified.



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2. **Management commitment.** Leadership support of the program can help assure that the program is used AND used effectively.
3. **Screening and selecting drivers carefully.** This can help create a reliable, safe team. Without safe drivers, no organization is likely to have a good long-term safety record. Establish clear hiring standards and a thorough screening process for anyone who drives on company business.
4. **Training drivers.** This can help to ensure that all drivers understand vehicle safety policies and procedures. All drivers should have access to information on safe driving strategies and techniques, including instruction in defensive driving.
5. **Managing drivers on an ongoing basis.** This is essential in helping to ensure that drivers are following fleet safety rules and driving safely.
6. **Managing accidents, when they occur.** This can help mitigate accident costs. It also helps you to understand your exposures and can reduce the potential for future losses.
7. **Establishing written policies and procedures.** This sets clear consistent expectations.
8. **Formalizing a plan for vehicle inspection, repair and maintenance.** This can help reduce costly, unexpected breakdowns, and can assist in avoiding accidents due to faulty equipment.

So what should be in a Fleet (or Vehicle) Safety program? Well, according fleet experts, the program itself should be comprehensive and detailed. However, it is very important to remember that any safety program – fleet safety or otherwise – should not occur in a vacuum, but is part of a larger organizational process. As such, management needs to clearly communicate that safety is a core company value and therefore, employees need to know that no job is so important that it should be done at personal risk. Drivers need to understand that the executives, managers, and supervisors actively support and participate in achieving the organization’s safety efforts.

Motor Vehicle Registration checks are among the key foundation elements for establishing a successful fleet safety program. Some companies, where vehicular operations represent their main component of business, such as haulers, transporters, etc., MVR checks should be run at least twice per year. The metrics should include collisions; both preventable and non-preventable, camera violations, open recalls, compliance with maintenance intervals, telematics (this is a new branch that uses the latest technology that allows electronic tracking and telecommunications devices so employers have to ability to observe driving patterns and behaviors of their drivers in real-time mode), unreported vehicle damage and observed driver behavior.

If a fleet safety program is working, it means the company is saving money. Direct costs can add up to millions of dollars a year. In addition, there are even greater hidden costs, such as higher insurance expenses, lost productivity, and administrative and legal expenses. But dollars saved aren’t the only metric. Success can also be measured in terms of the number of prevented accidents, the reduction in the fleet’s accident rate, and the decline in number of work days lost to injuries: all important metrics to support the value of a proactive fleet safety program.

1 (<https://www.travelers.com/resources/driver-fleet-safety/8-elements-of-a-fleet-safety-program.aspx>)

He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp posts...for support rather than illumination – Andrew Lang (Scottish poet)