

KEELSON Safety Summary

FLEET SAFETY

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Almost every company incurs some form of motor fleet responsibility. Fleet responsibility can cover as many as several hundred vehicles of all types and sizes and as few as a single passenger car.

Regardless of size, driver safety should be appropriately addressed in your company's loss control program. Key elements of your fleet safety program should include:

- Management Leadership
- Driver Selection
- Accident Recordkeeping, Reporting and Analysis
- Driver Training
- Safety Program Audit

Since management must rely largely on drivers to supervise their own actions behind the wheel, it is important that your fleet safety program emphasize these key elements in writing and in practice.

Management Leadership

In order for the program to function properly, management must assume leadership and set guidelines for its fleet operations as it does for its other business activities.

A policy concerning motor vehicle safety should be developed and implemented to:

- reflect management's position concerning driver safety;
- outline the company's approach to controlling losses;
- assign the authority and responsibility of personnel involved in the fleet safety program; and
- establish a system of accountability.

The nature and extent of the fleet safety program depends on the size of your fleet and the number of drivers; but, with proper management leadership, your company can reap the benefits associated with driver safety and a favorable image with the general public.

Driver Selection

The following criteria is recommended in selecting personnel whose job responsibilities include operating a motor vehicle:

- Confirm that the employee maintains a valid driver's license in the state that he/she resides. This includes a Commercial Driver License (CDL) where applicable.
- Ensure that the employee is qualified to operate the type of vehicle to which he/she is assigned.
- Review the employee's knowledge of safe vehicle operations and safe driving techniques by conducting a written examination and driving test.
- Review the employee's state Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) periodically (at least annually) to evaluate the individual's driving performance and observation of traffic laws.
- Review past driver performance and work experience through previous employer reference checks.

Accident Recordkeeping, Reporting and Analysis

Each vehicle should be equipped with a motor vehicle accident information kit, which includes reporting instructions, phone procedures, and an accident report form. Management should be consulted on sensitive issues, such as personal injury, impaired driving etc. Contact the United States Department of Transportation (DOT); your state Department of Motor Vehicles, or Keelson Partners for information and forms.

All accidents should be investigated to determine whether or not it was preventable, and to address the control measures necessary to prevent a recurrence. The DOT definition of a preventable accident is "any accident involving the vehicle unless properly parked which results in property damage or personal injury, in which the driver failed to do everything he/she reasonably could have done to prevent or avoid the accident".

A file should be maintained that includes the following information:

- driver's accident report;
- copies of the accident report submitted to various agencies (e.g. insurance carrier, DOT, etc.);
- accident investigation data;
- police reports; and
- any other useful evaluation information.

Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance

Driver and accident files are important segments of the recordkeeping process. This process would not be complete, however, without files documenting scheduled vehicle inspection and maintenance.

Over-the-road breakdowns are costly, provide a poor company image, and create hazards to other users of the road. Pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections will enable the driver to spot problems that can lead to trouble on the road.

Scheduled preventative maintenance by a qualified mechanic based on the vehicle manufacturer's specifications eliminates chronic performance problems that lead to long-range vehicle downtime. Complete, detailed preventive maintenance records allow management to analyze work performed on a vehicle to determine if additional work is necessary, not only for that vehicle, but for others in the fleet. It can also be a useful tool in evaluating the quality of the fleet (i.e. manufacturer, model, make).

Driver Training

Based on the driver selection process, most of your drivers have the basic knowledge and skills necessary to safely operate the vehicle. The goal of your driver-training program is to increase and improve these skills, and promote a "defensive driver" mentality into the driver's performance.

Training should be provided on an ongoing basis both in the vehicle and in the classroom. Initially, each driver should complete a defensive driving program, followed by annual refresher training in the form of safety meetings, videos and literature.

In-Vehicle training is an effective way to address new vehicle familiarization, pre- and post-trip inspection procedures and situations that warrant supervision.

A basic training curriculum can include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- company policy and procedures
- defensive driving
- federal, state and local regulations
- cargo handling and load securement
- emergency procedures and devices
- accident reporting
- review of accident trends

All training should be documented and retained in the personnel file.

Safety Program Audit

Once the program has been implemented, it must be audited periodically to ensure that each of the key elements are being properly addressed. The audit should be documented with a timetable for necessary follow-up corrective action.

For more Information

For more information on developing a “Fleet Safety” program or other safety and health issues, contact:

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