

FOCUS on Safety

AUGUST 2014

RISK CONTROL SERVICES

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 8

Commercial Vehicle Liability

The impact of motor vehicle crashes goes well beyond damage to vehicles. The human costs and the disruption of lives and business can be significant.

A motor vehicle safety program should address reducing the risk or probability of a crash and provide documentation of the program and activities to help defend a company after a serious crash.

Crash Prevention

Crash prevention must address driver behaviors or actions. Rather than a lack of knowledge, driver behavior is responsible for more crashes including injuries and death. The most common issues are:

- Drivers who are distracted are more likely to crash.
- Drivers who are fatigued are more likely to make more decisions that contribute to crashes.
- Drivers who were impaired were involved in close to a third of fatal crashes.
- Speeding was a factor in close to a third of fatal crashes.
- Driver and passenger failure to use seat belts results in many lost lives.

Common Controls

The following should be part of every motor vehicle safety program:

Driver Selection:

- Conduct motor vehicle records (MVR) checks
- Conduct background checks
- Review violation/conviction history
- Identify disqualifying convictions
- Include physical capabilities



Driver Qualification:

- Provide fleet-safety training
- Provide mirror-check training

Vehicle Policies:

- Notify company after citations, violations, or convictions
- Prohibit alcohol and controlled substances
- Limit personal use
- Prohibit U-turns
- Plan routes
- Plan maintenance
- Require authorizations for passengers
- Monitor off-route deviations

Personal Use:

- Prohibit lending of vehicles
- Prohibit non-business use
- Obtain auto-liability insurance

Driving Technique:

- Conduct road tests
- Establish goals for quality

Crash Investigation:

- Establish and document reporting protocols
- Provide accident kits and cameras

Non-Owned Vehicles:

- Prohibit use of non-owned vehicles

Reviewing Performance:

- Remove employees who no longer meet criteria
- Establish and enforce a progressive discipline policy

Communicating Expectations:

- Lock vehicles not in use
- Require vehicle restraints

Program Documentation:

- Compare MVR to written driving record criteria
- Maintain a list of employees who can operate vehicles
- Establish and document reporting protocols
- Develop and document expectations for compliance
- Conduct regular reviews
- Document all training

While driver behavior is a critical factor, it is also important to recognize system failures that contribute to the at risk situation. An example of this is dispatching a load into an area of inclement weather and not factoring time for road and traffic conditions. This situation could potentially cause the driver to make poor decisions in an effort to meet delivery deadlines. Managers should always be questioning if there is something in their system that could be reinforcing behaviors that allow dangerous situations to occur. Interdepartmental differences in procedures, goals, and objectives may come into conflict with each other and reinforce certain undesired behaviors resulting in crashes.

Resources

Pre- and Post-Trip Inspections, RC 222

Driver Selection, RC 284

Model Safety Plan: Motor Fleet Safety, RC 5291

Distraction from In-Vehicle Devices, RC 5412

[OSHA Motor Vehicle Safety](#)

For More Information

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