



RISK INSIGHTS

Steps for Businesses to Create Safer Drivers

Company drivers are exposed to several risks on the road. In fact, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, transportation incidents are the leading cause of work-related fatalities in the United States. Additionally, the most recent data from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety found that U.S. traffic crashes cost employers over \$72 billion annually, demonstrating that drivers can also create major liabilities for a company.

With these safety and financial risks, companies must take steps to ensure their employees are operating as safely as possible while driving. Doing so can not only help prevent injuries and property damage but it can also help organizations reduce the risk of facing liability claims and improve the company's public image by demonstrating a commitment to roadway safety. This article explores measures businesses can take to create safer drivers.

Tips for Creating Safer Drivers

There are several actions businesses can take to create safer drivers, including:

- **Assess risks.** Each company has unique risks depending on its size, location and industry, and regular risk assessments can help businesses identify their exposures related to motor vehicles.
- **Understand who is a company driver.** Individuals considered company drivers for business purposes include those hired with the primary purpose of driving and who operate a vehicle, including rental and personal vehicles, on behalf of the business.
- **Maintain written policies.** Understandable and enforceable motor vehicle safety policies that are regularly communicated can help convey a business's expectations and standards. Topics to consider covering include driver eligibility requirements, safety expectations (e.g., zero-tolerance for impaired driving), disciplinary procedures, seat belt use requirements and prohibitions on activities that cause distracted driving (e.g., cell phone use, eating and checking email).
- **Vet drivers.** Businesses should conduct background checks and evaluate motor vehicle records before hiring drivers. They should also verify work histories and certifications and ensure the prospective drivers pass written and road tests before driving for the company.
- **Train drivers.** Businesses should provide in-depth training to their drivers regarding the safe operation of motor vehicles. Topics may include defensive driving, proper use of safety features, weather monitoring, trip planning and accident response. This should occur upon hire and regularly throughout the drivers' careers.
- **Promote healthy, restful lifestyles.** Good health is an essential component of safe driving. Businesses should educate drivers on how physical and mental health conditions may affect their driving performance. They should also provide resources to address these issues and encourage drivers to eat healthily. To manage fatigue, companies may establish scheduling, driving hours and rest standards policies. Businesses should also encourage drivers to visit a doctor if they're experiencing fatigue or a sleep disorder.
- **Monitor drivers.** It is crucial to have systems in place to review company driver performance. Businesses should review all accidents, incidents and roadside inspection reports, and they should periodically ride along with drivers to assess their habits. Technology, such as telematics and dashcams, can also monitor performance. If unsafe drivers are identified, businesses should have procedures in place to remove them from the road.
- **Maintain vehicles.** Businesses should ensure their vehicles are properly maintained. Regular inspections by certified mechanics are necessary, and procedures to immediately address safety issues are paramount to reducing risks.
- **Provide incentives.** Businesses should provide safe driving incentives to individuals who adhere to the company's safe driving guidelines. Bonuses, additional paid time off and public recognition can provide positive reinforcement and encourage exemplary conduct.

- **Ensure companywide buy-in.** Involvement from all levels of an organization is necessary to help ensure a program's success. Senior managers can demonstrate their commitment to safe driving by ensuring adequate resources are available, setting a good example when driving themselves and regularly communicating safety expectations.

Conclusion

Employers have a duty to ensure safe working conditions for their employees and ensuring steps are in place to foster safe driving is essential to achieving this objective. Implementing measures to create a culture of safe driving can not only help prevent injuries and fatalities to those on the road, but it can also mitigate liabilities a business may face.

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