

## FLEET LOSS CONTROL MANAGEMENT CONTRACTOR FLEET SAFETY

Imagine the following headline next to a photo of your company vehicle, "Infant and Mother Killed in Fatal Crash". What could be worse? The answer is having the accident occur and not having a fleet safety program in place.

You and/or your company may be held liable for negligence. Failure to incorporate driver screening procedures, training and a vehicle maintenance program will be used as evidence to prove your guilt. If the claimant is successful, in addition to the emotional burden of enduring the persecution that will occur during the process, punitive damages will result. Awards generally exceed your policy limits. Victims or their survivors have received in excess of 10 million dollars.

Whether your company consists of 1 or 100 vehicles, you must protect yourself. A policy statement must be issued and a set of guidelines established for company vehicle use. The guidelines or fleet safety program should include driver selection procedures, driver training and supervision, accident investigation procedures, a maintenance plan, and fleet safety rules. Also, a driver recognition program may be helpful in motivating employees to adhere to the company's guidelines.

Driver selection is the most critical piece of the fleet safety program. Follow the proceeding guidelines when selecting those who will be driving for your company:

- ✚ Define the requirements for individuals you will allow to use a company vehicle.
- ✚ Determine their qualifications as compared to your criteria.
- ✚ Perform a personal interview and get a copy of their license.
- ✚ Check references especially Motor Vehicle Records (MVR).
- ✚ Conduct a driving test with the employee using the type of vehicle he or she will be using.
- ✚ If your fleet is regulated by the Department of Transportation (DOT), an employee physical is required, along with alcohol and drug testing. Periodically re-qualify drivers.

Once the driver's qualifications have been determined, provide training. An orientation will include a review of company rules followed by basic on-the-job training. Proper supervision will ensure that drivers maintain their ability. Hold supervisors accountable and keep the lines of communication open. In-service training can be scheduled periodically or as needed based on supervisor reports of driver performance.

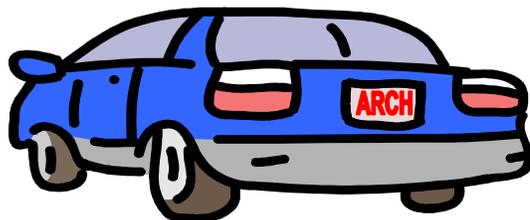
Make sure accident investigations are done. Finding out what caused an accident will help prevent future accidents. It may reveal flaws in your program or new problems with previously qualified drivers. Implement controls based on the accident results and maintain a record of all reports and corrective procedures.

When it comes to maintenance, an effective plan will prevent accidents and lower operating costs. A well maintained piece of equipment is safer and lasts longer. Drivers should inspect their vehicles prior to each use. Vehicles, which fail inspection, must be repaired before use. Periodically, a qualified mechanic should perform a more thorough inspection. Routine maintenance, such as oil changes, and repairs can be performed as needed. At a minimum, state regulations must be followed for inspections. The manufacturer guidelines are a good basis for routine maintenance. Keep accurate records of all vehicle inspections and repairs.

Finally, your fleet safety rules must reinforce traffic laws. Company directives for safe driving should include the following:

- ✚ Driver shall provide sufficient time to arrive at jobsites on time. Violation of traffic laws to reduce travel time is prohibited.
- ✚ Drivers must be mentally and physically alert prior to each trip.
- ✚ Use of alcoholic beverages or drugs which may affect driving ability is prohibited.
- ✚ Obey posted speed limits.
- ✚ Observe time interval following distance guidelines.
- ✚ Always signal your intentions before turning or changing lanes.
- ✚ Slow down for school zones, playgrounds or other areas where children may be present.
- ✚ Do not allow unauthorized individuals to use company vehicles.
- ✚ Drivers and passengers must wear seatbelts.
- ✚ Do not give rides to hitchhikers or strangers.

Incorporate other rules as needed to address specific concerns or state regulations which apply to your fleet. Don't get caught without a program. Lives and your business depend on it!



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