

A proper fleet safety plan might just save your business

A fleet of vehicles is often one of the biggest operating costs for any business. It is also one of the most prominent representations of a company's brand. Driver misconduct and vehicle abuse will affect operational costs and how the organisation is perceived.



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According to Tracker, it is therefore important for any business to manage its fleet appropriately and proactively, thus ensuring a safe working environment for employees, maintaining a good brand impression, and reducing road incidents and downtime.

Tracker recommends that the following actions be taken to ensure that businesses conduct themselves in a responsible manner and in the process not only protect their fleet but, more importantly, minimise their risk and ultimately promote safety for all road users.

Safe drivers

Endeavour to create a dependable, safe driving team.

Conduct background checks on all employees that will drive on behalf of the organisation. Make sure that they have the appropriate class of licence for the vehicle they are meant to drive, that they are competent and medically fit to drive.



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Assess their accident history and attitude towards road safety. Run a proper onboarding process with appropriate training, and review driver capability at regular intervals, at least annually.

Safe vehicles

Operate an appropriate and well-maintained fleet of vehicles. Choose vehicles that are suitable for your application and ensure that they are in a roadworthy condition. Also, consider the ergonomics of the cab to reduce strain on drivers.

Conduct routine vehicle inspections, repair and maintenance, based on the manufacturer's recommended service schedules. This will help to prevent breakdowns and accidents, and the vehicle will operate more economically. Also, only use quality replacement parts.

Ensure that the vehicle is utilised properly, for example, loaded correctly. Consider providing additional equipment for use by drivers during breakdowns or emergencies, such as spare bulbs and fuses, a toolkit, a reflective jacket, a torch, a first-aid kit and a fire extinguisher.

Safe policies and practices

Draft applicable written policies and procedures and ensure that they are followed. These should include the organisation's rules for driving and associated activities. For example, how to safely load the vehicle, use of mobile phones and two-way radios while driving, ban on giving a lift to hitchhikers, how to check on vehicle safety, and what actions to take in the event of a breakdown or accident.



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Set realistic and achievable driving schedules, and make allowances for conditions that could cause unexpected delays or affect the duration of the trip, such as adverse weather and roadworks, so that drivers are not forced into dangerous situations. Plan trips based on adherence to speed limits and using the safest available routes. Consider that the most likely times for drivers to fall asleep are from midnight to 6am and 2pm to 4pm.

Also, take into account the requirement for rest periods – drivers should take a 15-minute break every two hours, sleep for at least eight hours in a 24-hour period, and have at least one day off every week.

Safe road use

Help drivers to safely use the road through adequate training. This can include an overview of the organisation's safety policies and practices, familiarisation training for new vehicles they are required to drive and new equipment they are required to operate, instruction on safe driving techniques and defensive driving. Also consider training on how to prevent a hijacking, anti-skid and anti-rollover techniques, economic driving habits, and fatigue management.

Drivers should practice safe road use by adhering to the speed limit, and not drive while impaired whether due to tiredness, alcohol, or drug use. They should avoid distractions, and stop in designated, well-lit areas.

Organisations could adopt an incentive programme to encourage safe road use and improvement in driving competencies and techniques. Drivers could be awarded based on an accident-free record, the highest scores in the annual driving assessment, attending and passing training courses, or coming up with ideas on how to make the company's driving practices safer.

Safe tracking

Implement procedures for safe tracking of fleet vehicles and drivers. For example, assign pre-determined check-in points for a trip. If the route changes, the driver should inform the route coordinator and determine new check-in points. Also, ensure that all road incidents are recorded and that the information is evaluated and used to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Use vehicle telematics and an in-vehicle video camera to monitor actual driving behaviour for safety purposes. The data from vehicle telematics and a video camera solution allows for early detection of bad driving habits and associated risks, and steps can be taken to engage in proactive and targeted driver coaching.

Consider installing vehicle tracking systems, as some services allow you to personally monitor and track the location of a vehicle via a website.

Additional benefits include proactive alerts like movement notifications; impact detection that immediately alerts the control centre in the event the vehicle is involved in an accident as well as the severity of the incident; and an assist button inside the vehicle which allows the driver to make contact with the fleet owner (or representative) should there be any kind of roadside or medical emergency.



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"No matter the size of your fleet, a fleet safety plan supported by vehicle telematics technology can provide a number of advantages," says Michael van Wyngaardt, head: business solutions at Tracker.

"The most obvious benefit is improved safety for your employees. However, businesses small and large can also minimise the risk associated with owning a fleet of vehicles, realise improved operating efficiencies and lower operating costs. Add to this a reduction in losses, downtime and insurance costs by minimising accidents. This will promote a culture of ownership, continuous improved efficiency and safety for all employees and road users."

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