

SAFETY Program Outline: Vehicles

Vehicle operations can vary tremendously depending on the type of operation you have. This can range from a few cars and vans, to pickups or heavier trucks. Regardless of size or number, management must exercise certain controls other than just checking drivers' licenses and assigning vehicles.

MANAGEMENT'S ROLE

Top management should set an example by operating their vehicles in a safe and responsible manner. Like other safety activities, employees will not accept the program if they perceive that top management isn't following it too.

- ◆ All drivers should be instructed that the company safety policy extends to vehicle operations. Management responsibilities in vehicle safety should include the following:
- ◆ Develop and promote accident prevention measures throughout those who will be driving company vehicles or their own vehicles for company activities.
- ◆ Evaluate driver safety performance and maintain driver safety records.
- ◆ Investigate all vehicle accidents and maintain vehicle accident records for analysis.
- ◆ Review vehicle inspection forms and follow up on corrective maintenance.

DRIVER SELECTION

People differ in their abilities to drive safely. Proper selection of drivers will assist management's efforts to obtain employees who will not only drive safely, but will handle company property properly and project a good public image.

- ◆ It may be necessary to determine the driving skills for the different typed of vehicles operated by your company to determine the type of driver needed.

- ◆ Application and reference check – Always take a written application for drivers and follow up by checking references and previous employers. **All prospective drivers should have motor vehicle record (MVR) checks performed to document past driving history.** A lack of this activity could open the company to a “negligent entrustment” lawsuit for not being a prudent company and hiring drivers with good driving records.

All states now require operators of certain types of vehicles to hold a commercial drive's license.

These include vehicles...

- ◆ With a gross vehicle weight or combined gross vehicle weight of 26,001 lbs or more
- ◆ Used to haul listed hazardous materials or waste
- ◆ That can transport 16 or more passengers including the driver

Commercial vehicle license holders must possess a valid health certificate approved by the state, and pass a written examination. For details in licensing drivers with a CDL, contact your state Motor Vehicle Licensing Department.

It is essential that a file be maintained on each driver to include Motor Vehicle Reports, license documentation, accident reports, complaints, applications, and past driver history.

DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Communicating safety responsibilities to all drivers is an essential part of the program. This should extend not only to drivers of company vehicles, but also drivers of personal vehicles used on company business.

Minimum Rules

- ◆ All company drivers will obey all laws regarding speed limits, traffic signs, etc.

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Minimum Rules (continued)

- ◆ Use of seat belts is required by all occupants of company vehicles and personal vehicles used on company business.
- ◆ Picking up hitchhikers or other unauthorized passengers is prohibited.
- ◆ Substance abuse prior to or during operation of a company vehicle will not be tolerated and is grounds for dismissal.
- ◆ All service and delivery vehicles will be inspected daily, prior to operation.
- ◆ All accidents, no matter slight, will be reported to management immediately.
- ◆ No vehicle will be left unsecured. Doors will be locked.

These are basic rules. Rules which apply to specific situations can be developed and added if necessary.

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION

A preventive maintenance program can go a long way to making sure the vehicle is ready to go when needed. It promotes safety by finding minor problems before they cause major breakdown or accidents. A basic preventive maintenance program should include these items:

- ◆ Establish a preventive maintenance program to assure that your vehicles will function with minimum repair.
- ◆ Vehicles should be inspected regularly by drivers, with deficiencies noted on a report. A vehicle inspection report should be developed and used.
- ◆ At a minimum, the vehicle manufacturer's recommended service schedule should be followed. All inspections, service and repair work should be recorded on maintenance forms and kept in the vehicle file.

ACCIDENT REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations and most states require that accidents be reported within a specified time period, depending on severity. All accidents, no matter how slight, should be reported to management and investigated to determine how future accidents can be prevented.

The driver can gather data at the scene to identify what happened, and to assist in filing an insurance claim.

Including a sketch will help in the investigation. All reports should be filed for periodic review.

Accident prevention is closely geared to accident frequency and known causes of accidents. By recording the pertinent facts relating to each accident, you will be in a better position to conduct accident prevention activities tailored to your problems.

- ◆ Maintain an accident reporting and recording system for your drivers and vehicles. This will enable you to pinpoint your trouble areas so that corrective action can be taken.
- ◆ Each driver should be required to file a written report immediately following each accident regardless of injury or to the extent of property damage.

LIABILITY EXPOSURE

A policy that prohibits employees or others from using company vehicles for their personal use will help control an unnecessary liability exposure. However, if you do allow personal use of a company vehicle that is parked at the employee's home, you should limit the use of that vehicle to that employee.