

10 Steps to an Effective Motor Vehicle Safety Program

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Typically, we think of motor vehicle safety programs as a way to help prevent our vehicles from being involved in a crash. While this is true, it is only one of the many reasons to implement and maintain an effective program. Properly developed and implemented programs can also help lower the cost of ownership by maintaining the vehicles properly, reduce the cost of claims due to traffic accidents, improve employee safety/morale by ensuring their safety while inside vehicles, as well as help an entity to avoid a public relations dilemma that can occur if a poorly maintained vehicle causes an incident with the general public.

While auto accidents may or may not be the most numerous occurrence of claims for your organization, typically, the severity of auto accident claims tend to be larger cumulatively than those of other categories. In 2015 the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that roadway incidents were the number one cause of workplace fatalities, accounting for over one-quarter of all workplace fatalities. In fact, since the BLS started tracking and recording this data in 1992, roadway incidents have been the number one cause of workplace fatalities in all business sectors.

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommend a 10-step program to help minimize risk associated with a motor vehicle safety program. We will examine each of these steps and how they can be implemented to help strengthen your program.

The 10-Steps:

Step 1: Senior Management Commitment and Employee Involvement. Safety requires leadership. Some of the responsibilities of effective management must include: inspiring employee participation in all levels of the organization; respond to incidents, investigate and be willing to make repairs in a timely manner; be responsive to reports made by employees; provide active participation in safety meetings; lead by example by abiding by all policies and procedures of your organization.

Step 2: Written Policies and Procedures. A written statement of your entity's commitment to reducing risk in the motor vehicle program is essential to building a motor vehicle safety program. Policies and procedures must be written, clear and communicated to all employees. Motor vehicle safety policies must include these basic principles: protection of the public; safety and health of every employee; identification and correction of hazards; safety shall be given priority over all else; and enforcement of the policies shall be consistent and documented.

Step 3: Driver Agreements. Driver agreements are a formal agreement between the employer and the employee that include an acknowledgement of a "good faith effort" by the employee to drive safely and with due regard. Driver agreements should include expectations of safety performance, care and maintenance as well as proper reporting of accidents or moving violations. Agreements should be signed by any driver

who operates a company vehicle or who may be driving during company time. These driver agreements supplement documentation created during new-hire orientation.

Step 4: Motor Vehicle Record Checks. Proper selection of drivers is the foundation for any motor vehicle safety program. Overall performance of your organization's program is directly affected by the driver selection procedure. Previous driving experience should be reviewed through an initial MVR check prior to employment as well as through



reference checks. After hiring, MVRs should be checked at least every three years or more frequently if deemed necessary. Equally as important as checking the employee's MVRs, is developing and implementing a policy for what your organization deems to be an acceptable driving record. Consistent and documented implementation of your policy is key.

Step 5: Crash Reporting and Investigation. Creating a policy requiring the prompt and proper reporting of all vehicular incidents is important. This policy should require employees to report all damage or incidents, regardless of severity. It is also a good idea to include in each vehicle an "accident reporting kit" that details step-by-step instructions employees are expected to take following an accident and provides to the employee the tools to implement these instructions. Following an incident an investigation should be performed in order to learn the contributing factors of the incident and to make changes to prevent future occurrences.

Step 6: Vehicle Selection, Maintenance and Inspection. When searching for vehicles to add to your motor vehicle fleet, consider all the safety features of the vehicle. Do research, consider purchasing vehicles that rate "best in class" for crashworthiness. After purchasing the vehicle, proper maintenance is essential. Planned inspections provide an opportunity to discover issues prior to actual issue occurring. Documenting these inspections, the issues discovered and the corrective actions taken is crucial.



Step 7: Disciplinary Action System. Develop a policy that outlines the course of disciplinary action to be taken should it be necessary. Notify employees at the time of hire and provide regular refreshers on your policy. Disciplinary action must be consistent with your policy and must always be documented.

Step 8: Incentive Program. An effective incentive program can be a crucial part of any safety program. Rewards and incentives help to make safety part of your entity's culture and show employees that safety does pay. The cost of these incentives are negligible compared to the cost of the accidents they can help avoid.

Step 9: Driver Training and Communication. Safe drivers must be developed. It is the responsibility of the organization to train its drivers properly. Accident investigations will routinely reveal that a root cause of accidents is poorly trained drivers. Two main types of driver training include classroom training and hands-on/behind-the-wheel training. Classroom sessions can include identifying possible hazards drivers could encounter as well as the theories of proper driving. Having your drivers attend training sessions, such as skid car training, can be an invaluable hands-on experience.

Step 10: Regulatory Compliance. Both the organization and the driver are responsible for adhering to highway safety regulation. Having a handbook that includes policies such as seat belt and mobile device policies can help ensure the adherence to all state, federal and local regulations by drivers.

By choosing to implement all or even some of these tips, your motor vehicle safety program should experience real, measurable improvement. ■

Resources

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and OSHA: "Guide for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes"
Work Safe: "Motor Vehicle Management Resource Guide"

Motor vehicle Safe: "Basic Motor vehicle Safety Management Model"