

Safety on the Road: Risk-Based Management of Non-Regulated Fleets

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Introduction

A non-regulated fleet includes any vehicle not covered under Department of Transportation Regulations (DOT). Effectively managing a fleet may be considered to include selecting, leasing, insuring and providing vehicles to sales and/or service personnel so they can do their job. Certainly keeping vehicles operational is another key element. Managing a comprehensive fleet program should also include recognizing and managing fleet risk. Effective management of fleet risk reduces crashes, injuries and associated costs.

Getting Started

Conduct a fleet audit to identify gaps and opportunities in the current management system and to define a baseline. Determine the number and types of vehicles used. Evaluate how vehicles are selected. Answer a few simple questions:

- Why are the vehicles provided? For example, in Europe the vehicle may be considered compensation whereas in the U.S., vehicles are used for work.
- Who is permitted to drive the vehicle? What, if any, are the requirements to be considered qualified to drive? Is there a system to identify and address high-risk drivers?
- What applicable policies are currently in place?

Look at the data and identify metrics currently being measured and tracked. Crashes-per-million miles is a common measurement to provide comparison year-over-year. This information is also useful for benchmarking with peer companies.

Identify the key players involved in the fleet management system. This may include: fleet manager, risk management, environment / health and safety (EHS), human relations, sales function leaders and outside vendors used for leasing and maintenance. Begin to form partnerships to engage key stakeholders. Fully integrated programs bridge gaps that may be present with a silo approach to fleet management

Policy and Program

A policy defines the requirements of a fleet program. A written program and/or procedures provide guidance on how a company manages all aspects of their fleet program to ultimately comply with policy. Elements that should be considered for a policy/program include: driver qualifications, how to identify

and manage high-risk drivers, behaviors and training. The program may also define what should be considered when selecting a vehicle. Ergonomics, fuel efficiency and safety features (e.g. anti-lock brakes) are a few aspects that should be considered. Vehicle inspection and maintenance requirements as well as compliance to company standards should be addressed. Emergency equipment decisions may also be defined. Electronic device policies (e.g. no text messaging, cell phones vs. hands-free cell phone use) and/or distracted driving policies should be defined, clearly communicated and enforced. Review current policy and programs and look for areas that should be strengthened.

Understanding Fleet Risk

Hazards associated with a fleet include: mechanical, physical, behavioral, road, ergonomics and impact hazards. Hazard recognition is essential for assessing risk (likelihood and potential severity of negative outcomes). Developing a hazard checklist is useful for identifying proximate causes and actual root causes of a crash. The best way to reduce future crashes is to analyze the root cause of accidents (and near-miss events for more mature programs) and determine corrective and preventive actions to prevent similar future events. Using a root cause analysis tool or process (five-whys or fishbone diagram) helps get to true root causes including management system issues.

Measuring Success

Define measurements that will quantify success. Collecting three years of data trending provides a solid baseline. Many companies separate fault-vs.-no-fault and moving (crashes) vs. stationary vehicle damage. Crashes-per-million-miles is a common metric but others should be considered. Analyzing crash data patterns combined with root-cause analysis information provides valuable insights that should be utilized to develop crash-reduction goals and set strategies.

Frequency Rate Calculation:

$$\frac{\text{Number of collisions} \times 1 \text{ million}}{\text{Vehicle miles driven}}$$

Conclusion

Managing fleet risk effectively will reduce crashes and impact the bottom-line. Understand root causes. Capture successes. Check out available resources (see below for a few) and finally, consider benchmarking with peer companies to drive success.

Resources and Benchmarking

- ANSI / ASSE Z15.1 Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations
- Employer Benchmarking: Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) www.trafficsafety.org
- Federal Highway Administration: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov>
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Regulations: www.fmcsa.dot.gov
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>
- Road safe: <http://www.roadsafe.com/>

- Fleet safe: <http://www.fleetsafe.org/>
- ASSE driver safety brochure:
http://www.asse.org/newsroom/presskit/docs/409349_DriveSafetyBrochure.pdf
- ASSE practice specialty group <http://www.asse.org/practicespecialties/transportation/>
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):
www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/motorvehicle/
- Department of Transportation: <http://www.dot.gov>
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/home>
- FMCSA Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Belt Partnership: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt>