

Fleet Management: The Driver

As a fleet manager you're responsible for choosing the safest drivers for your fleet. A sound fleet management program can help make this task more manageable and at the same time promote driver safety and collision prevention.



Managing driver risk

Many fleet managers don't consider four basic risk management procedures when it comes to selecting drivers:

- **Driver classification:** checking driver's licences and records
- **Driver screening:** putting only the most qualified drivers behind the wheel
- **Driver orientation:** offering a training program and handbook that clearly explains your company's policies and expectations
- **Accident investigation:** thoroughly investigating collisions if they happen

Making these procedures part of your fleet management program is a good idea to keep costs down and maintain your company's safety record.

Driver classification

If someone is hired to drive for you, or even use their personal vehicle as part of the job, you have a right

and a responsibility to access and review their driving record.

It's a good idea to create a profile of all drivers, with information such as the driver's prior experience, time with the company, driving record, mileage, accident record, etc.

Driver screening

No one will tell you they're a bad driver, so checking drivers before you hire them makes good business sense. Use a standard application form and include the following in your evaluation:

- Obtain a Driver Abstract or Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) report
- Check licence class and any endorsements
- Confirm length of driving experience by licence class held
- Complete medical or health questionnaire and eyesight test
- Perform a police check (especially if you are transporting or working with valuable goods or tools)
- Collect claims and accident history from previous employers
- Check references
- Conduct an aptitude or knowledge test and a road test

If you use a driver pool or agency, make sure their practices and standards are similar to yours.

Driver orientation

Create a basic driver orientation program that clearly outlines your company's policies, standards, lines of communication, and procedures.

The foundation of the program should be a driver handbook that will serve as a reference guide for all drivers. The handbook can include a message from senior management and should be regularly

updated. It's also a good idea to have each driver sign and date their book once they have read it to ensure they understand and agree to the policies.

Topics to include in a driver handbook include:

- Message from the president and driver's code of conduct
- Repairs and operating expenses
 - New vehicle warranty
 - Repairs and preventive maintenance
 - Parking and tolls
 - Traffic violations
 - Seatbelts
 - Tires
 - Plates and vehicle licence renewals
 - Insurance
- Use of vehicles
 - Authorized drivers
 - Personal use responsibilities
 - Use restrictions
 - Collision deductible
- Collisions or other losses
 - Key steps
 - Reporting collisions
 - Damage to company automobiles
- Defensive driving
 - Winter driving
 - Common driving errors
 - Other safety tips
- When leaving the company...

Accident investigation

Unfortunately, auto collisions do happen from time to time. But proper reporting allows you to analyze the collisions that are happening with your fleet to help prevent them in the future.

The right response from the driver after a collision is important, as it can affect the outcome for your company if legal action is taken by an injured person.

Providing drivers with a form to fill out at the time of the collision is the best way to ensure proper reporting and response.

After a collision, drivers should:

1. Stop immediately and keep calm
2. Warn oncoming traffic
3. Help anyone who is injured, but don't perform first aid unless trained – call 911 if necessary
4. Do not argue, accuse anyone or make any admission of blame for the collision
5. Call the police
6. Record as much information on the reporting form as possible, including:
 - Details of other vehicles and drivers including injuries and insurance information
 - Names and contact information of any witnesses
 - Names, contact information and injuries of any occupants of other vehicles involved in the collision
 - Details of what happened, including a sketch of the area or intersection involved
 - Document the scene of the accident with pictures

With commitment and planning, the risks and costs of managing your vehicle fleet can be minimized.

For further information on this topic, please contact your independent insurance broker.

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