



## Organizational and Safety Solutions

### *Driver Training and Motivation*

#### Background

Training and motivating drivers are important steps in the success of any Fleet Loss Prevention Program. An effective program integrates both activities into the role of the fleet manager and will enhance a driver's knowledge, skills, and performance.

Driver training and motivation are necessary supplements to the driver selection. The hiring process does not always bring candidates with all the knowledge and skills required for the job. Like other employees, drivers do not always maintain the motivation to excel found in many new hires.

#### Driver Training

As a supplement to the driver selection process, the amount of training needed varies directly with the complexity of the job as well as the knowledge and experience of the driver. An effective driver-training program highlights the knowledge and skills necessary for a driver to perform at a satisfactory level. Proper training will help reduce operational disruptions and minimize unnecessary costs due to accidents and equipment abuse.

At a minimum, your company's driver training program should include documented instruction on topics such as:

- Government requirements for drivers
- Company transportation safety policies and goals
- CSA 2010 BASIC categories
- Company accident trends
- Company required driving behaviors
- Accident reporting procedures

## Keys to Successful Training Programs

Why do some driver training programs succeed, while others fail? Here are the keys for a successful training program:

- 1) **Management support**– Any training program lacking support from top management is either doomed to failure or to only minimal success. The training policy should include a signed message of support from senior management, and to all management personnel held to the same driving standards as all employees.
- 2) **Set specific and quantifiable goals** – If, for example, one of your goals is to reduce accidents, you should establish a target goal for the number of accidents. Throughout the year you should review ongoing progress toward meeting the goals.
- 3) **Accountability** – Training expectations should include changed behavior. If, for example, a training goal is to reduce the number of rear end collisions by 20%, then the drivers should be expected to consistently execute the driving behaviors on which they were trained, such as proper following distance and avoiding distractions.
- 4) **Training sessions spaced throughout the year** – This guarantees far better knowledge absorption and retention, rather than holding lengthy annual sessions.
- 5) **Include numerical testing** – This will help you determine if the training has been effective. Compare the scores year-to-year to verify that scores are not declining. If so, you will need to make some revisions and adjustments.
- 6) **Supplement classroom training with behind-the-wheel training** – Behind-the-wheel ride-alongs will give you the opportunity to view actual driving behaviors, and to stay in touch with day-to-day issues and conditions faced by the drivers. It also helps to make good drivers feel appreciated.

To facilitate the driver-training program, a driver trainer should be designated. In larger companies, several part-time driver trainers may be designated or a full-time trainer hired. The use of designated trainers and standardized training material makes training more consistent in content and application. An individual selected as a driver trainer should be one who commands the respect of the other drivers, has a good driving record, and has the ability to convey the information in a stimulating manner. The information being presented must be perceived as applicable and important to their daily driving tasks, or the training will not be effective.

To establish a driver training program or to enhance an existing one, please contact your PMA Risk Control Consultant.

## Driver Motivation

Some drivers are motivated by wages alone, some for the self-satisfaction of accomplishing the task, while other drivers require additional forms of motivation. Regular and effective communication between the supervisor and drivers will provide the opportunity to determine the most effective incentives for your drivers. One commonly used motivational technique is a driver incentive program. These programs look to reward performance or behaviors that exceed the expectations of the driver's normal accountabilities. Incentive programs can be used for accident-free driving, fuel-efficient driving, or whatever other parameter is suitable for your company's operations. Make sure that the incentives are fair and equally attainable for all drivers. For example, if you select accident-free driving, you will need to balance and compare driving territories. A driver whose territory includes driving in heavy populated urban areas cannot be expected to compete equally with a driver whose territory is mainly highway driving.

The reward or incentive in a driver incentive program can take many forms, including but not limited to items such as pins, belt buckles, patches, jackets, hats, or other items. In some cases, gift certificates or a monetary reward can be considered, but incentives can only provide a return on the investment if they are administered properly and effectively stimulate the driver's interest. Once an objective is reached, awards should be presented promptly, preferably by top management, and in the presence of peers. Whenever possible, publicity should be arranged through company newsletters, local newspapers, and other forms of communication.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your local PMA Risk Control Consultant.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE** - *The information and suggestions presented by PMA Companies in this risk control technical bulletin are for your consideration in your loss prevention efforts. They are not intended to be complete or definitive in identifying all hazards associated with your business, preventing workplace accidents, or complying with any safety related or other laws or regulations. You are encouraged to alter the information and suggestions to fit the specific hazards of your business and to have your legal counsel review all of your plans and company policies.*

