



Risk Control Services Technical Bulletin

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 regulations
- Company policies and rules
- Pre- and post-trip inspections
- Familiarization with company vehicles
- Driving routes and schedules
- Cargo handling procedures
- Defensive driving
- Emergency procedures and warning devices
- Accident reporting procedures

Types of Training

When implementing or enhancing a driver-training program, there are three levels of training that need to be addressed:

Orientation training – to indoctrinate new drivers to your company and establish the basis of the fleet safety program;

Refresher training – to remind drivers of safe driving techniques and provide updates on specific changes in relation to driving routes, cargo, equipment, government regulations, company policies and rules, and other pertinent information;

Remedial training – to address substandard performance issues related to vehicle operations, customer relations, or motor vehicle accidents.

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.

Driver training can be completed in a classroom, behind the wheel, or even online depending on the training topic. Classroom and online training can be effective using either a one-on-one or a group training approach for presenting topics such as government regulations, accident reporting procedures, and company policies and rules. Behind the wheel training provides the best method for practical instruction to a driver under closely controlled conditions on topics such as familiarization with company vehicles, defensive driving skills, driving routes and schedules, cargo handling procedures, emergency procedures, and warning devices.

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. Motivation can be individualized between the driver and supervisor, and may be based solely on the driver's pride as a professional, or a group technique may apply more effectively. 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. In order for an incentive program to be effective, drivers should be held accountable for following the policies in your fleet safety program. The policies should be integrated into your new employee orientation and should be clearly communicated to all employees on a regular basis.

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 with the company logo and/or a safety message to recognize the effort. 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. Objectives may be measured in time or as a measurable improvement from a baseline, but can only be reached if there are established rules and procedures to ensure all drivers, supervisors, and other participants understand the program. 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.

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