Managing Fleets

As experienced drivers we often take the complexities of driving for granted.

It is only when we reflect on our first driving lessons that we begin to recall what at first seemed an impossible task.

Sharing the road with other often unpredictable drivers, trying to navigate our way to unfamiliar places and all while at the helm of a complicated machine designed to transport us in comfort to our destination makes driving not just complex, but also taxing on our mind and body.

Years of driving can make drivers complacent and oblivious to the poor habits they have developed. Even something as simple as forgetting to do your head-checks when changing lanes can lead to an accident.

Cars used for work purposes are considered a workplace and therefore subject to the same work health and safety regulations as any other work environment.

One of the many roles of fleet managers is to consider the safety risks to their staff when driving for work.

Though many of the tips in this Fact Sheet may seem obvious, employers who fail to make certain their employees are fully aware of their responsibilities when driving for work can face heavy corporate penalties and individual fines.

This Fact Sheet looks at some of the strategies fleet managers can employ to reduce common risk exposures faced by their staff whilst driving for work.

Taking a risk management approach

Before you can begin addressing the risks associated with your fleet vehicle program, you first need to assess and fully understand the risks your organisation face. Different vehicles may generate different risks and therefore the best starting point for any risk management program is to take stock of the various elements of your program i.e. vehicle purchases, drivers, procedures, repairs, maintenance, security etc. and assess the risks associated with each.

A sample risk assessment for motor fleet vehicles is outlined below:

Example Fleet management risks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Risk ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver fatigue</td>
<td>Motor vehicle accident</td>
<td>Medium – high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of vehicles not suited to driver i.e. small vehicle, large driver</td>
<td>Musculoskeletal injuries</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of mobile phones when driving</td>
<td>Driver distraction causing accidents</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risk controls

- Institute a fleet management policy and supporting procedures and ensure it is endorsed by senior management
- Communicate your fleet management policy and procedures to staff
- Allocate the responsibility for overall fleet management to an appropriate member of staff
- Ensure staff members are aware of their obligations and responsibilities when using company vehicles
- Include vehicle purchases within your purchasing policy. Be sure to consider elements such as authorised suppliers and repairers, vehicle safety, vehicle security and vehicle suitability to the task and driver
- Complete pre-employment driver history checks taking into account licence restrictions and driving and claims history. Details should be verified with your state/territory road traffic authority
- Ensure employment contracts for drivers clearly state their obligation to abide by both the rules of the organisation and obey the law. Drivers should sign this commitment and be made aware of instant dismissal scenarios for breaches of law such as drink driving
- Include driver rules and safety regulations in employment inductions
- Provide theoretical and practical driver safety lessons to drivers. Ensure records are maintained and signed by responsible parties
- Maintain a vehicle servicing and repair database
- Ensure driver safety handbooks are included in motor vehicles
- Maintain a database for incidents/accidents and ensure repeat offenders are subject to performance management protocols
- Implement disciplinary action protocols for drivers involved in multiple incidents and ensure that the potential consequences of failing to comply with the requirements of the policy are outlined in your policy and employment contracts as well as clearly communicated to drivers
- Enforce the taking of rest breaks at regular intervals. Fatigue is not just an issue when driving long distances. Your fleet management policy is an opportunity to set the standard. Drivers should be informed that they must take regular rest breaks when driving for more than a set number of hours and pull into a rest stop for a power-nap if they are tired
- Impatience is a leading cause of accidents on Australian roads. Avoid placing unreasonable timeframes on your staff and ensure they are aware of the standards and behaviours they are expected to adhere to when driving. Though it is not always easy to show patience and courtesy when another driver does something silly or dangerous, the behaviour of your staff is a reflection on your organisation’s reputation
- Prohibit the use of mobile phones when driving and ensure drivers do not eat or drink whilst driving
- It is very easy for drivers to become complacent when driving. After years of experience, head-checks are often the first precaution to go. Ensure that drivers are aware of the correct procedures by including safety reminders in vehicles i.e. basic safety technique guide under windscreen visors etc.
- Drivers should avoid distractions when driving. Ensure that your fleet management policy prohibits drivers from stacking items in cars or having loose materials flying around on seats as even the slightest distraction can lead to a serious accident
- Provide your drivers with the flexibility to reschedule meetings and tasks during adverse weather conditions where operationally possible. Include a clause in your policy for pre-journey vehicle inspections before each outing to ensure basic safety functions like windscreen wipers, tail-lights, headlights and tyres are in good condition and working order
- Inform drivers of their obligation to inform the fleet manager if they are taking or begin taking medication that may interfere with their driving abilities. Drivers who may be affected by medication should be prohibited from driving while taking the medication.

General tips for safe working driving

- Advise drivers to fill up the petrol tank when their gauge reaches a quarter of a tank to avoid being caught short (this is particularly important for long-distance and remote driving)
- Include provisions for vehicles to be serviced at regular intervals within your fleet management policy
- Provide chamois for cleaning windows in each vehicle.
- Ensure drivers give themselves plenty of time to get to their destination
- Enforce the use of seatbelts
- Ensure your drivers complete a safe driving course.
Monitoring and review
As with any other risk management strategy, you will need to regularly monitor and review the risk treatments implemented to reduce driver risk exposures. Ensure that you regularly review your fleet management policy, procedures and incident reports data and make improvements where required.

Further resources
Australian Department of Finance and Deregulation
The Australasian Fleet Managers Association
www.afma.net.au
WHS Authority in your state or territory
Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce
www.vacc.com.au
Monash University Accident Research Centre
www.monash.edu.au/muarc

Relevant Standards, Regulations and Acts
AS/NZS 3533:2009 Amusement Rides and Devices
HB 266:2010 Guide for Managing Risk in Not-For-Profit Organisations
◆ Relevant state/territory occupational health and safety legislation and regulations
◆ Appropriate state/territory road traffic authority

Risk management helpdesk
For further information and assistance on managing fleets or to obtain a copy of our Fleet Management Checklist, please contact the risksupport Helpdesk on 1300 660 827.
To obtain a fleet management policy or amend your existing policy, please contact your Account Executive on 1800 011 028.