



FLEET SAFETY PROGRAMS

They Can Make A Difference

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It seems that two items which are continuously stressed in the workplace these days are increasing health and safety and the seemingly never ending budget constraints. All of us from front line staff to managers to department heads are trying to create a safer workplace, while at the same time reduce our costs, without lowering service levels. Needless to say, a constant challenge.

However, there is a one way to achieve these goals - development of a Fleet Safety Program. This will increase employee safety through accident awareness and prevention training, while at the same time reduce your costs. If you can demonstrate to your insurance carrier that you have an ongoing fleet safety program, and that you have a commitment to safe driving, your premiums will be lower. Less accidents means fewer repair costs and reduces the potential for employee injury and lost time from work and hardship for families.

Whether you have a small fleet of equipment consisting of a few trucks, riding mowers, tractors, or a large fleet such as a municipality, school board, or post secondary educational institution with many pieces of equipment; your operation will benefit by having a fleet safety policy and

program.

Fleet safety programs can have a number of objectives, but primarily they should be designed to reduce and eliminate accidents, thereby increasing safety and reducing fleet operating costs through repairs and insurance. From personal experience in sitting on a committee to develop a fleet safety program, it can be seen that by instituting a safety program accidents have been reduced, which translates into lower insurance premiums and lower repair costs for vehicles and equipment. Depending on the size of the operation, these savings can be sizable.

First and foremost a fleet safety program must stress Defensive Driving. Simply defined, defensive driving emphasizes that a defensive driver is one who is always aware that others can and will make driving errors. Therefore, a defensive driver operates his/her piece of equipment or vehicle in a manner which avoids accident-producing situations for potential accidents, given the traffic and road conditions.

Some objectives of a fleet safety program can be the following;

- develop an attitude of defensive driving in the operators of your vehicles and equipment,
- reduce and eliminate vehicle and equip-

ment accidents thereby reducing fleet operating costs by means of accident prevention techniques and employee training,

- promote accident prevention through investigation and review of all accidents which will assist in ensuring the accountability of drivers for their actions,
- provide the safest possible environment for employees and other community members through operating vehicles and equipment in a professional and courteous manner,
- ensure that all operators of your fleet of equipment know and obey the regulations of the Highway Traffic Act and appropriate municipal By-Laws, and
- provide for continuous education and training for employees to attain and maintain the driving skills necessary to avoid accidents.

An effective fleet safety program will clearly spell out guidelines for the hiring staff who will be driving vehicles and/or equipment as part of their duties. This should begin with the job posting or job description. The portion of the job posting related to driving should identify the following;

- note which class of licence is required for the position ie. G, D, A, DZ, AZ, F



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etc. Some jobs may require combinations of these licence classes. Indicate the position requires a Valid licence,

- note that applicants must submit a current driver's abstract with their application and that this will be a factor in considering which applicant is selected,
- note that applicants must have a good driving record and that a practical driving test will be a part of the interview process, and
- note that a pre-employment medical verification of ability to operate a vehicle will be requested from external applicants (and internals if possible), and that job offers will be conditional on providing such medical documentation.

Once an employee is hired, a fleet safety program should address what measures are taken to ensure that defensive driver training is ongoing and that a process is in place to periodically review employee driving records. An employee's personal driving record can effect your fleet insurance costs, since that person will be viewed as an increased risk and this cost will be calculated during re-assessments.

The review process may involve the following;

- upon commencing employment, an employee should be sent to a DDC (Defensive Driver Training Course),
- annually obtain driver's abstracts for all drivers. If a driver has accumulated six or more demerit points he/she should be brought in for an interview to discuss their driving record and sent on a DDC refresher course,
- every 2 years send all drivers (regardless of their driving record) to a refresher DDC,
- if an employee loses their driver's licence they should not be allowed to operate any fleet vehicle or equipment.

Vehicle Accidents

A fleet safety program should address what should be done in the event of an accident. The responsibility for reporting an accident rests with the vehicle operator. An accident investigation kit should be located in all vehicles (these are usually available from your insurance carrier). All vehicles should contain copies of the vehicle ownership, current insurance policy # and carrier, and CVOR #, if applicable. If an accident occurs the following should be done;

- Call the police, obtain the name, address and insurance information from the other driver involved, obtain the names and addresses, telephone number of any witnesses, the name and badge # of the police officer,
- If appropriate, draw a sketch of the accident and write a description of what happened.
- If a camera is available take pictures of the vehicles and accident scene, and
- Report the accident to your Supervisor at the earliest opportunity.

Accident Review

A review of all accidents is a critical procedure in a fleet safety program to try and eliminate future similar incidents. Vehicle accidents should be reviewed by a departmental manager, fleet safety board, or fleet safety officer to determine whether the accident was preventable. Accidents can only be reduced through an investigation to correct them. Accident reviews should be viewed as constructive and not a witch hunt. It is vitally important to ensure that drivers/operators learn from their driving errors so they are not repeated.

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Vehicle Inspection

A final key component to an effective fleet safety program is instituting a daily vehicle inspection procedure. All drivers/operators should perform a circle inspection prior to driving to ensure that a vehicle or piece of equipment is safe for operation. All previously unreported body damage should be noted and reported. At a minimum, the following items should be checked on a circle inspection form;

- check fluids such as oil, coolant, windshield washer and top up as required,
- check tires for defects and proper inflation,
- check all lights and directional signals,
- check horn and audible reverse alarm,
- check first aid kits, fire extinguishers and emergency equipment,
- refuel as required,
- ensure that copies of accident report form, vehicle insurance and registration are in the vehicle.

In summation, the information presented in this article represents only the basics of a fleet safety program. Such a program can be as simple or complex as one wishes. The important point is to establish a program which demonstrates an ongoing commitment to safety which benefits employees through increased safety and lowers repair costs and insurance premiums. Develop a safety policy and a defensive driving philosophy and make sure that it is continuously reinforced through training and support. Send employees regularly to DDC training, and for specialized vehicles and equipment, bring in the supplier or manufacturer to provide training. In many equipment ten-

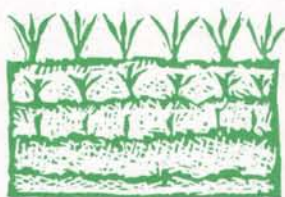
ders we include a clause which states how many hours of training the supplier must perform upon delivery of the unit. Regularly obtain driver abstracts for all drivers to ensure that everyone has a valid licence.

Finally, recognize employee safe driving through awards such as pins, certificates, luncheons, even just coffee and donuts. Such a program will foster a safer workplace while at the same time reducing operating costs for fleet management. Fleet Safety Programs - they do make a difference!

GRASS CLIPPINGS

Yearly removal of clippings from bluegrass cut at one inch were found to contain 5.7 lb. of nitrogen, 0.6 lb. of phosphorus and 3.4 lb of potassium per 1000 square feet.

As a leaf develops immature cells at the base of the leaf enlarge and mature forcing the leaf tip upward until all cells at the base are mature. This process may take from three to five weeks depending on growing conditions. Successive mowings remove the blade elevated above the mowing height. The green stub left below the mowing height may live for several more weeks.



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