Building a Safety Culture

Important Steps to Creating the Right Environment for Your Fleet to Operate Safely

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WHAT ARE SOME IMPORTANT STEPS
IN CREATING A FLEET SAFETY CULTURE?

The most important way to create a safe fleet of drivers is to instill a culture of safety within your fleet. In addition, every fleet needs to have initial, as well as ongoing, safe driver training as an important part of their safety policy. One might think safe driving is just common sense, but when drivers get caught up in the hustle and bustle of every day they may stop thinking of safe driving, so it needs to be reiterated on a regular basis. Check out the following ways to create a fleet safety policy and culture.

1. *Make Fleet Safety Part of the Organization's Driver Recruitment Process*

2. *Training Drivers*

3. *Good Communication*

4. *Fleet Safety Policy*

5. *Seat Belt / Safety Harness Policy*

6. *Vehicle Safety and Maintenance*

7. *Crash / Collision Management*

8. *Deterrent or Corrective Technology*

9. *Incentivize a Safety Mindset*

10. *Accountability*

11. *Management Buy-in*

12. *Measurement and Optimization*

① Make Fleet Safety Part of the Organization's Driver Recruitment Process

A carrier's safety culture and carrier safety, in general, can be significantly affected in the hiring portion of operating a CMV fleet. The drivers that carriers use to represent them in the external environment, in which most operational activities occur, must be a focus for safe carriers. The most important traits considered in the screening process are:

1. History of Alcohol/Drug-Related Violations
2. DOT Crashes
3. Violations Related to Speeding
4. Prior Driving Experience
5. Background Checks

② Training Drivers

This can help to ensure that all drivers have access to information on safe driving strategies and techniques. Safety and compliance are not one and the same. Compliance is the minimum; safety requires a lot more. When a new driver is hired, it is necessary to provide all information the employee will need to perform the job. Existing drivers should also be trained regularly. All drivers should have access to information on safe driving strategies and techniques, including instruction in defensive and distracted driving.

Different types of training can be incorporated. The traditional driver training allows for total participation, drivers can ask instructors questions and they will gain necessary skills and knowledge through real examples. On the other hand, online courses will allow for more flexible scheduling, faster completion, and no commuting to class. During the pandemic, online driver training became a great option to continue to get drivers ready while not exposing them to COVID-19. Consider also real-time event coaching via technology.

Check out this resource on Recommended Road Safety Practices - HTTPS://TRAFFICSAFETY.ORG/ROAD-SAFETY-RESOURCES/PUBLIC-RESOURCES/RECOMMENDED-ROAD-SAFETY-PRACTICES/

Another good resource to check out is the Guide to Defensive Driver Training - HTTPS://TRAFFICSAFETY.ORG/ROAD-SAFETY-RESOURCES/PUBLIC-RESOURCES/GUIDE-TO-DEFENSIVE-DRIVER-TRAINING/

③ Good Communication

Making safety a part of the corporate culture begins with excellent communication. Repetition of the safety message serves to increase daily awareness. Also, addressing timely safety issues, like COVID-19, inclement weather, and road closures can help the drivers feel safer knowing that management is staying informed of current situations and is looking out for them.

Fleet managers can incorporate safety in day-to-day communications with a safety slogan, in newsletters, in every meeting or conference call. For example, maybe use "Think Safety Always" as your slogan and end every conference call by reiterating it. Also, incorporate your safety slogan on posters in office/facilities, on stickers for trucks, on letterhead, in newsletters, etc.

Fleets can also employ the use of podcasts, private social media chat groups, and messaging apps to help keep employees and drivers in the know.

④ A Fleet Policy is a Necessity

A company fleet policy is an excellent way to foster a safe driving culture. A formal fleet policy should contain certain elements like – a Seat Belt Policy, MVR reviews, OSA Management, Drug & Alcohol Management policies, safe driver training, an accident review committee, and personal use limits / allowance.

Consequences for violations of safety policy must be included and enforced as well. They should be clear, simple, and consistently and universally applied. Putting policies and procedures in place before disastrous events can ease the burden regarding the consistent handling of issues and safety for your company.

Posting and sharing that policy and making all new drivers read and sign it will help ensure it is used.

4 Institute a Seat Belt Policy

This might sound simple and silly. But it is crucial for helping reduce injuries related to collisions and other traffic or driving incidents. Stress that every driver and every passenger in every fleet vehicle must buckle up before it moves. Focus should be on the safety aspect of the policy as well as the responsibility drivers have for the safety of others on the road. Studies have proven that injuries would have been reduced, or completely avoided, if seat belts had been worn at the time of a collision. The use of seat belts by company vehicle operators and all occupants of the vehicle must be mandatory.

5 Provide Safe Vehicles

Your fleet operation should be providing your drivers with the safest vehicles that can do the specific jobs for which they are designed. In addition, any equipment added should be scrutinized for safety. This can help reduce costly, unexpected breakdowns, and can assist in avoiding accidents due to faulty equipment.

Nuclear litigations are on the rise and heavy vehicles can be potentially deadly weapons if they are not cared for and / or handled properly. Formalizing a plan for vehicle inspection, repair and maintenance is a must. One idea for accomplishing that would be to appoint someone responsible for a Vehicle Safety / Maintenance program. Safety and Fleet Managers should consider that it is important to manage and maintain records regarding scheduled and preventative maintenance, upkeep of safety devices such as fire extinguishers, vehicle safety inspections, and so much more and to do so in a convenient, online, easy to understand platform giving a one source of truth into your overall compliance in a single dashboard.

⑥ Crash Reporting and Investigation

Establish and enforce a crash reporting and investigation process. All crashes, regardless of severity, should be reported to the employee's supervisor as soon as feasible after the incident. Company traffic safety policies and procedures should clearly guide drivers through their responsibilities in a crash situation. All crashes should be reviewed to determine their cause and whether the incidents were preventable. Understanding the root causes of crashes and why they are happening, regardless of fault, forms the basis for eliminating them in the future. A targeted, comprehensive safety program will help change driver behavior and reduce the frequency, severity, and costs of accidents.

As always, it is important to observe the federal requirements for CMV operators and carrier fleets at the time of collisions as well with regards to reporting and cataloguing incident data and driver requirements.

Utilizing advanced techniques and technology to quickly collect required information is a best practice.

Check out this Cost of Crashes Calculator to get a better idea of potential impact of crashes to a company's bottom line - HTTPS://TRAFFICSAFETY.ORG/ROAD-SAFETY-RESOURCES/PUBLIC-RESOURCES/COST-OF-CRASHES-CALCULATOR-2/

(7) Invest in Technology

There are a variety of safety technologies that you can invest in including adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning systems, blind-spot warning devices, speed limiters, collision mitigation systems, alertness / fatigue testing tools, camera technology, etc.

That precludes fleets and drivers and their vehicles to a massive amount of data collection and storage requirements. Not only that, someone needs to manage it all. Technology such as an intelligent compliance platform can help navigate all the data flowing in and put it into context, displaying an overall view of safety and regulatory compliance in your fleet.

8 Provide Incentives for Safety

Develop and implement a driver reward / incentive program to make safe driving an integral part of your fleet culture. Safe driving behaviors contribute directly to the bottom line and should be recognized as such. Recognize drivers for extraordinary safety records, such as clean driving records or no accidents. Some ways to do this would be a feature in a company newsletter, praise from the CEO/Senior Executive, hold contests, have monetary or other awards. Gamification has also become very popular in recent years. Having a published schedule of awards and messaging on how to participate helps give your team something to look for to and work towards. Eventually, as more and more awards are given, a culture of safety will begin to emerge.

9 Accountability and Consistency

A safety culture holds employees accountable for keeping themselves, other employees, family, and customers safe. This is true not only during the performance of their job duties, but elsewhere as well. Consistency in messaging and shared values will help produce the best results. Having someone in the company, like a Safety Accountability Officer, responsible for providing safety messaging and follow up to make sure everyone is following the guidelines would be helpful.

Regular safety meetings where peers can hold each other accountable, check-ins with management to make sure the driver is operating safely, and providing protection to those reporting being forced to operate in unsafe conditions are all things that can go a long way in the accountability and enforcement of a culture of safety.

(10) Get Management Commitment

Senior management can provide leadership, set policies, and allocate resources (staff and budget) to create a safety culture. Actively encouraging employee participation and involvement at all levels of the organization is a good practice and will help the effort to succeed. To obtain leadership support, it is crucial to demonstrate that a focus on safety reduces operational costs by driving down accident pay outs, litigation expenses, etc. Reporting data on safety and compliance helps move the topic into the spotlight which makes senior staff and leadership more problem and solution aware. Once you can articulate and demonstrate the need for a safety culture and the impacts it can have, you'll soon see resources being redirected to safety initiatives. That said, for it to be successful, safety needs to be a core value; it can't change like shifting priorities.

11 Benchmark Your Safety Efforts

Look at what is working well along with what is not. Adjust your safety policies and practices as needed. Set goals around safety that are specific and measurable – like the S.M.A.R.T. method. Make sure the goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. It is amazing how this simple schema can make a huge impact on results.

Examples – Reduce the number of fleet accidents by 20% over the course of one year or Reduce total costs associated with crashes by 25% over the next six months. Analyze your results after the timeframe has expired and based on the results, make any safety policy adjustments as needed.

Leveraging technology like business intelligence or safety and compliance platforms go a long way in lessening the burden while also making for a more professional presentation of your hard-earned safety results that help grow your fleet and allow it to thrive.

For more information and assistance in implementing a driving and operational safety program in your fleet, you can contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) HTTPS://WWW.NHTSA.GOV/ and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) HTTPS://WWW.OSHA.GOV/.

There is no one single key to ensure that your fleet operates safely, rather you need a comprehensive approach to safety. The people at the top levels of the organization need to regularly communicate the value that your fleet places on safety and must set the tone for a safety culture within the organization. All employees at every level need to embrace the safety policy to make it a true success!

If you are feeling lost and don't know where to start, reach out to a safety and regulatory compliance partner to get a full fleet assessment to identify areas in need of improvement and gaps that need filling. There is nothing wrong with reaching out for help!

Six Ways to Build a Safety Culture Within Your Fleet", Fleetowner, Joseph Evangelist, Sept. 17, 2019.

"10 Ways to Create a Safety Culture Among Fleet Drivers", Automotive Fleet, Oct. 13, 2010.

"Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes", joint effort by NETS, NHTSA and OSHA.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) website - https://www.nhtsa.gov/

The occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) website - https://www.osha.gov/

About Fleetworthy Solutions

At Fleetworthy Solutions, we believe the minimum requirement is only the beginning. And that core belief drives everything we do, including our quest to change the way the trucking industry thinks about compliance.

For more than thirty years, we built a reputation for helping fleets exceed state and federal standards. Our ability to drive unprecedented results helped us achieve a 98% client retention rate.

Today, as Fleetworthy Solutions, we are building on that legacy. We are taking fleets of all types and sizes to new heights through the power of Intelligent Compliance: Fleetworthy's proprietary approach to integrating exceptional client service, advanced technologies, and unmatched industry expertise. Intelligent Compliance provides the fleets we serve with the visibility and control it takes to streamline processes, reduce risk, and improve profitability.

Of course, your fleet could settle for merely being compliant. But a lot of things hinge on the performance of your drivers and vehicles. Every day they are on the road, they represent your company in a highly visible way...for better or worse.

So why settle for meeting the minimum requirement when you can go *Beyond Compliant?*

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