



Finding the right drivers and helping them stay safe

Incorporating safety strategies into your retention plan can help you keep quality drivers.

Hiring qualified, safety-conscious drivers—and keeping them for the long haul—is a familiar challenge throughout the trucking industry. While the desire for competitive compensation and benefits often leads drivers to seek opportunities with other trucking companies, there are plenty of other factors. Like anyone else, your drivers want to feel appreciated, and they want to know you're dedicated to helping them stay safe out on the road.

As you assess your driver retention plan, think of these factors as opportunities for improvement and reflection, rather than challenges. Listen to your drivers and develop a plan that makes sense for them. When they see the value in representing your company, they'll want to be a long-term part of it.

DRIVER SELECTION AND HIRING PRACTICES

To hire the right drivers, you first need to understand what those drivers are looking for in an employer. Considering the unique challenges drivers face, the key factors that influence these decisions shouldn't be surprising:

- Steady work
- Competitive pay, benefits, and home time
- Company support while on the road
- Respect from management

Work with your current drivers to determine whether you need to improve in any of these areas as a company.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

With progressive training programs, you can offer your drivers the potential for advancement within your company, along with guidance and strategic plans for a range of other areas that impact them directly. Consider implementing training programs that cover:

- Technical requirements
- Safety requirements
- Lifestyle and health issues
- Personal challenges

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR DRIVERS

Implement a 90-day driver discussion program, and address the following with each of your drivers:

- Challenges the driver has encountered
- Actions they've taken to resolve the challenges
- Prevention strategies for future drivers

Work with your management team to assess driver feedback. Make any necessary modifications to your driver training program to help other drivers manage the same challenges. This will help your drivers feel empowered—they'll know you value what they have to say when they see you using their advice to keep their fellow drivers safe.

These discussions will also allow you to address any performance or behavioral issues you're having with an individual driver, and offer the driver the opportunity to correct the problem.



DISPATCHER OPERATIONS

Because dispatchers are responsible for assigning and coordinating loads, they should communicate and work closely with their assigned team of drivers. Evaluate the number of drivers your dispatchers can effectively manage. Organize joint training sessions and discussions with drivers and dispatchers to strengthen their lines of communication.

WORKING CONDITIONS AND HOURS OF SERVICE

Driving a truck day in and day out can be stressful, emotionally draining, and physically taxing. Drivers often deal with:

- Long, irregular hours
- Subpar living conditions on the road
- Time away from home
- Poor treatment from shippers and receivers

Evidence links the economic and scheduling pressures on trucking operations with out-of-service violations and crashes.* Truckers who exceed hours-of-service regulations have an increased risk of being involved in an accident.

Use the resources at your disposal to ensure your drivers comply with hours-of-service regulations, and provide services that encourage open communication with drivers. This will reinforce your commitment to helping them achieve a work/life balance.

SAFETY-RELATED REWARDS AND INCENTIVES

When you and your management team demonstrate your commitment to safety, it carries over to your drivers. Incentivizing safe habits is a great way to make this commitment tangible. A successful driver safety incentive program should include:

- Commitment from the management team
- Employee participation in program design
- Attractive rewards
- Progressive safety credits

- Simple rules and clear expectations
- Perceived equity and attainability
- Family involvement
- Strategies for preventing accident under-reporting
- Supplemental rewards with safety training

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Improving public perceptions of the truck driving profession can increase the pool of strong applicants and improve employee retention. Because the general population is largely unfamiliar with the day-to-day experience of being a truck driver, they can often rely on generalized, often negative portrayals of drivers.

At the same time, these perceptions also depend on the attitudes the drivers express. As an employer, you can do your part to improve your drivers' attitudes toward their profession. Focus on:

- Limiting office turnover
- Pursuing driver-friendly freight practices
- Addressing driver grievances
- Developing non-pay incentives
- Providing training and orientation programs

While your drivers are ultimately responsible for keeping themselves safe out on the road, it's up to you to hire, train, and incentivize drivers who are dedicated to safety. As a company, emphasize the behaviors you value in your drivers, and work with them to foster open communication and a positive working environment.

We'll help you get there.

Visit [sentry.com](https://www.sentry.com) or give us a call at 800-4SENTRY (800-473-6879) to learn more.

*The content of this material has been sourced in large part from information published by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. For more information, visit [fmcsa.dot.gov](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov).

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