

Creating an effective safety program

As a transportation professional, it's important that you recognize the importance of an effective safety program. By creating a formal reference containing your company's safety-related policies and procedures, you can help your employees gain the knowledge and skills they need to perform at a high level.

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Fleet safety depends on management's commitment to implementing a formal safety program. An effective safety program will interact with most aspects of fleet operations, and will challenge your supervisors and drivers to continually improve their skills.

Carrier checklist:

- Put the safety program in writing, including a commitment statement signed by ownership
 - Designate a person responsible for safety and complying with regulations
 - Encourage the safety director to take advantage of professional development opportunities, such as training seminars and industry association meetings
 - Make sure your company and its supervisory staff maintains membership—and remains active—in trade and professional associations
 - Allocate adequate financial and administrative resources to the safety department, so they can perform their necessary tasks
 - Ensure the fleet safety program provides the framework for safety management to:
 - Recruit and screen new drivers
 - Monitor driver qualifications and safety infractions
 - Provide training to upgrade driver skills, including defensive driving and avoiding distracted driving
 - Provide a formal mechanism for investigating and reviewing accidents
- Implement safe driving incentives
 - Monitor maintenance and equipment safety
 - Oversee and implement regulatory compliance
 - Establish carrier safety standards
 - Communicate program goals to drivers and supervisory personnel
 - Monitor program effectiveness
 - Offer recognition to drivers who meet the required standard of performance
 - Monitor driver retention/turnover rates, and investigate the cause behind poor rates
 - Integrate safety technology to reduce accidents





At Sentry, we want to help you protect the assets that contribute to the success and profitability of your trucking firm. Be diligent in your safety practice efforts—your attention to promoting safety will help you minimize losses and reduce your insurance costs.

PREVENTABLE ACCIDENTS

Work with drivers to reduce preventable accidents. In judging whether a driver's actions were reasonable, determine whether he or she drove defensively and demonstrated skill and knowledge. The concept of a preventable accident is a fleet safety management tool designed to:

- Help establish a safe driving standard for drivers
- Provide criteria for evaluating individual drivers
- Provide objectives for accident investigations and evaluations
- Provide a means for evaluating the safety performance of individual drivers and the fleet as a whole
- Provide a means for monitoring the effectiveness of fleet safety programs
- Assist in dealing with driver safety infractions
- Assist in implementing safe driving recognition programs

Carrier checklist:

- Develop a company program for investigating accidents
- Establish an accident review committee
- Define a standard for company drivers' safe driving performance
- Ensure that your company's standard for safe driving performance is challenging enough to highlight areas for safety improvement
- Instruct drivers about the company standard for safe driving
- Instruct drivers about company procedure for evaluating accident preventability

QUALIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Driver performance is key to an effective safety program. Safe driving requires skill, knowledge, integrity, physical health, and mental health. Public safety—and your company's reputation—relies on drivers being fully qualified. Carefully select new drivers and adequately monitor procedures for existing drivers.

Carrier checklist:

Evaluating prospective drivers:

- Ensure that your recruiting efforts attract an adequate number of qualified applicants for effective selection
- Establish formal procedures for interviewing, testing, and screening applicants
- Define standards of skill and knowledge that successful applicants need to meet
- Utilize appropriate methods to check out previous employment history and references
- Check each applicant's prior driving record—including moving and inspection violations, and crash history
- Check each applicant's physical qualifications
- Ensure all drivers meet the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) qualification requirements

Monitoring existing drivers:

- Develop a formal program for monitoring your drivers' qualifications
- Perform an annual driving record review (required)
- Perform a periodic review to ensure all drivers' medical certificates are up to date
- Monitor drivers for drug and alcohol abuse
- Develop a means for identifying deficiencies in drivers' skills and knowledge, and a procedure for remedial training
- Establish a procedure for reprimanding and terminating unqualified drivers
- Develop a policy for dealing with driver infractions, including progressive disciplinary actions and remedial training



SAFE DRIVING RECOGNITION

Recognizing and incentivizing superior driving performance should be an integral part of your formal safety program. Identify selected drivers as examples for the rest of the fleet. Develop your own incentive program internally, or participate in national safe driver award programs with associations such as the National Safety Council and the American Trucking Associations. Some state trucking associations and vendors also have driver award programs, which you can use as a resource.

Carrier checklist:

- Develop a formal safe driver recognition and incentive program
- Establish a means for evaluating driver performance

GOALS FOR SAFE DRIVING RECOGNITION:

- Encourage safe driving performance
- Heighten driver safety awareness
- Foster driver professionalism
- Monitor individual driver performance and skills
- Monitor fleet performance and your fleet safety program's effectiveness
- Measure and reduce your drivers' roadside inspection violations

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

You should not tolerate alcohol or substance abuse. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly one-third of all traffic-related fatalities occurred as a result of alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2015, and drugs other than alcohol are involved in 16% of motor vehicle crashes. Be aware of the seriousness of this problem, and establish procedures to control it.

Carrier checklist:

- Check prospective applicants' driving records and references for evidence of drinking or substance abuse problems
- Establish a written no-tolerance drug and alcohol policy
- Make all drivers aware of how drinking and substance abuse affects driving performance, and of the company's formal policy regarding it

- Ensure drivers' immediate supervisors and dispatchers know how to identify personnel under the influence:
 - Immediate supervisors are often in the best position to observe unusual driver behavior, so they should be aware of changes in drivers' work behavior, personal relations, emotional moods, and appearance
 - Supervisors of CDL drivers must receive 60 minutes of training on identifying drivers impaired by alcohol and another 60 minutes on substance abuse
- Encourage immediate supervisors and dispatchers to notify management about problem drivers
- Make a list of references and potential sources for help available to drivers

Driver checklist:

- Don't drink and drive
- Don't abuse drugs (legal or illegal)
- Find out if prescription or over-the-counter medications may adversely affect your ability to drive safely
- Get help immediately if you have, or think you may have, an abuse problem

ILLNESS AND FATIGUE

Ill or fatigued drivers can be hazards to themselves and others. Despite knowing this, drivers sometimes push their bodies beyond reasonable limits. As a result, comprehensive federal regulations regarding physical qualifications and hours of service have been established.

Carrier checklist:

- Ensure all operations personnel—including dispatchers and driver managers—are fully aware of all federal and state regulations relating to physical qualifications, medical examinations, and hours of service
- Clearly inform drivers of maximum on-duty and driving times
- Use electronic logging device software or cross-check driver logs with odometer readings, fuel receipts, or weight scale tickets
- Explicitly inform drivers how you will deal with violations

Driver checklist:

- Use mandatory off-duty time to get exercise and enough rest
- Schedule your trips so that you drive when you're normally awake, and sleep when you're normally asleep, when possible
- Be careful with any kind of medication, because some can make you sleepy
- Don't drive if you get drowsy



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Consider the following elements for your continuing education and driver training:

- Curriculum content
- Facility adequacy
- Training vehicle compatibility with company fleet
- Driver trainer qualifications and experience
- Certification
- Referrals
- Hours of actual driving instruction and practice

At Sentry, we offer a range of driver training aids through our customer website, Sentry Connect. You can also find information through government and trade sources. Take care to locate, select, and evaluate the most appropriate ones for the company. Determine what combination of audio-visual aids, posters, manuals, pamphlets, online safety training, and other literature will likely be most effective in improving your company's training program.

Carrier checklist:

- Conduct a survey of available driver training aids:
 - Consider those from national and state truck associations, safety organizations, company in-house productions, and private sector providers and consultants
- Update your training as needed to meet new regulations and license requirements

Your company driver manual is a key training and communication link between your company and your drivers. It's indispensable for training new drivers and provides a reference for existing drivers. Develop your manual progressively and frequently update it.

Maintain a current driver manual that:

- Describes the fleet safety program
- Sets forth company standards for safe driving
- Includes company procedures for reviewing and classifying accidents
- Explains company disciplinary procedures

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PLANNING SCHEDULES, LOADS, AND ROUTES

Tight schedules, unusual cargoes, and unfamiliar or hazardous routes can cause unfavorable driving situations. Assist your drivers with pre-trip planning to minimize the risks associated with such conditions.

Carrier checklist:

- Minimize tight schedules and make allowances for adverse weather conditions
- Review schedules and enforce hours-of-service statutory regulations, developing a disciplinary policy to deal with violations
- Maintain driver duty status records
- Develop the means to forecast available driver hours
- Plan dispatching to minimize the need for excessive on-duty schedules
- Ensure dispatchers know how to match cargoes with vehicles during dispatching
- Teach drivers how to deal with sealed cargoes
- Determine how your company handles overloading
- Determine how your company trains drivers on proper load securement and inspection procedures
- Plan routes and coach drivers to avoid high-hazard locations
- If hauling oversize or overweight cargoes, obtain appropriate permits and precisely plan your route to avoid weight-restricted roadways and inadequate bridge clearances

Note: As a trucking company, you have many regulatory obligations under the Department of Transportation that relate to the topics we've addressed above. Be sure to learn about and implement those required controls.

For additional information on developing effective safety programs or other safety topics, please contact your Sentry agent or your regional Sentry safety consultant at 800-443-9655. We also encourage you to visit our customer website, Sentry Connect®, via sentry.com.