

Establishing an Effective Fleet Safety Program

By Matthew Betz

A national employers group advocating safer travel on U.S. roads, NETS offers a 10-step program to minimize crash risk and protect employees and the company's bottom line.

Every 12 minutes, someone dies in a traffic crash, every 10 seconds an injury occurs, and every five seconds a crash occurs. More importantly, any one of these could happen to your employees. Regardless of organization, occupation, or vehicle use, almost certainly the most dangerous part of the workday for most people is the time they spend behind the wheel. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the leading cause of death of workers in the United States is motor vehicle crashes. It is our responsibility as fleet professionals to greatly reduce these statistics.

Although we are all trained to recognize and eliminate risks to workers on the job, off-the-job injuries and deaths also significantly impact productivity and costs. Motor vehicle crashes both on and off the job can have serious physical, emotional, and financial consequences for employees, keeping them from peak productivity. For that reason, creating a traffic safety program for all employees presents the fleet manager with a unique opportunity to work with others in creating positive results beyond the automotive fleet. Some organizations even extend safety program resources to employee family members to further control the risk of lost productivity and medical insurance claims.

A complete driver safety program will:

- Save lives and reduce the risk of life-altering injuries throughout the organization.
- Protect human and financial resources.
- Reduce the risk of liability associated with crashes involving employees on company business.



Realizing the development and implementation of an effective fleet safety program can be a daunting task. The National Association of Fleet Administrators (NAFA) is partnering with the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) to provide training materials, such as the *NETS Traffic Safety Primer: A Guidebook For Employers* to its members. This guide includes a step-by-step analysis to develop a fleet safety program.

NETS 10-Step Program to Minimize Crash Risk

The NETS 10-step program provides guidelines to show that an employer can improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. Following these steps helps to ensure that qualified drivers are hired, only qualified drivers are allowed to drive on company business, drivers are trained and supervised, and organizational vehicles are maintained properly. Adherence to the 10 steps can also help keep automotive insurance costs as low as possible.

Step 1

Senior Management Commitment

Employee safety while commuting to and from work is so important, it requires the attention of top-level management. These executives can provide leadership, set policies, and allocate resources (people and budget) to create a safer work environment. Management can also encourage involvement at all organizational levels. Senior management support is essential to truly create a culture of safety.

Some high-level statistics may help influence management to allocate resources to a safety program.

- Motor-vehicle crashes cost the U.S. economy \$230 billion in 2000.
- Those same crashes cost employers \$60 billion.
 - \$40 billion from on-the-job crashes.
 - \$20 billion from off-the job crashes.
- Average cost per crash: \$16,500.
- Average cost per fatal crash: \$504,000.

Step 2

Written Policies and Procedures

A written statement emphasizing the commitment to reducing traffic-related deaths and injuries is essential to a successful program. Create a clear, comprehensive, and enforceable set of written traffic safety policies and communicate them to all employees. Distribute policies to all employees and discuss them as often as possible. Consider incentives for sticking to the rules and point out the consequences of disregarding them. Sample policies are available from NAFA and NETS.

Step 3

Driver Agreements

Establish a contract with all employees who drive for work purposes, whether they drive assigned organizational vehicles, pool vehicles, or personal vehicles. By signing an agreement, the driver acknowledges

According to the Numbers

- Nearly 95 percent of the 11 million vehicles involved in motor vehicle crashes in 2004 were passenger cars or light trucks.
- Compared with other vehicle types, utility vehicles experienced the highest rollover rates: 36.2 percent in fatal crashes, 9.6 percent in injury crashes, and 2.4 percent in property-damage-only crashes.
- Regardless of crash severity, the majority of vehicles in single- and two-vehicle crashes were traveling straight prior to the crash. The next most common vehicle maneuver differed by crash severity: negotiating a curve for fatal crashes, turning left for injury crashes, and stopped in traffic lane for property-damage-only crashes.

Source: National Center for Statistics Analysis.

awareness and understanding of the organization's policies.

Step 4

Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) Checks

Check the motor vehicle record (MVR) of all employees who drive for work purposes. Drivers with poor driving records must be screened out because they are the most likely to cause problems in the future. The MVR should be reviewed periodically to ensure the driver maintains a clean driving record. Clearly define the number of violations an employee/driver can accumulate before losing driving privileges. When driving is an essential work requirement, losing this privilege may require termination of employment.

Step 5

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 possible after the incident. Company policy should clearly guide drivers through their responsibility after a crash. All crashes should be reviewed to determine the cause, their pre-

ventability, and what can be done to avoid similar crashes in the future.

Step 6

Vehicle Selection, Maintenance, and Inspection

Selecting, properly maintaining, and routinely inspecting vehicles are an important part of preventing crashes and related losses.

Organizations should review and consider the safety features of all vehicles before inclusion on the selector list.

Vehicles should be placed on a routine preventive maintenance schedule for servicing and checking safety-related equipment.

A vehicle technician should perform a thorough inspection at least annually, and the results should be documented in the vehicle file.

Personal vehicles used for business should be maintained in a manner similar to fleet vehicles.

Step 7

Disciplinary Action System

Introduce and enforce a disciplinary action system that includes a predetermined course of action after the occurrence of a moving violation or preventable crash. The majority of these programs are based on a point

Vehicles Involved in Fatal Crashes by Vehicle Type in 2005

Vehicle Type	Total	Percent
Passenger Cars	25,029	42.16
Light Trucks	22,838	38.47
Large Trucks	4,932	8.30
Motorcycles	4,655	7.84
Buses	278	0.47
Other/Unknown	1,641	2.76
Total	59,373	100

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

system, with points assigned that correlate with the infraction severity. In many cases, the threshold is set so that one very serious infraction (e.g., DWI) disqualifies the employee from driving on company business.

Step 8

Reward/Incentive Program

Because safe driving behaviors contribute directly to the bottom line, many organizations reinforce safe driving behaviors by investing in a reward or incentive program. Positive results are realized when an individual's driving performance is incorporated into overall job performance evaluations.

Step 9

Driver Training/Communication

Provide continuous driver safety training and communication. Even experienced drivers benefit from periodic training and safe driving practice reminders.

Step 10

Regulatory Compliance

It is important for fleet managers to ensure adherence to all highway safety regulations. Regulatory agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).
- U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- Employment Standards Administration (ESA).

Fleet Safety Efforts Earn Return on Investment


Motor-vehicle crashes bring needless pain and suffering to employees, family members, and co-workers, and are extremely costly to employers. For organizations with large fleets or employees who drive many miles annually, the likelihood of a catastrophic accident is increasingly high. By implementing a workplace traffic safety program and promoting safe driving practices both on and off the job, employers can create a workplace culture that values safe driving behavior, protects their bottom line, and safeguards their most valuable asset — their employees.

Want to Learn More?

Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes is available in PDF format as a free download from www.osha.gov/Publications/motor_vehicle_guide.pdf.

This 35-page document was developed jointly by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), NHTSA, and NETS. It contains the NETS 10-step program and more.

Additional safety publications, training materials, and instructor-led educa-

tional seminars are available from NETS (www.trafficsafety.org) and NAFA (www.nafa.org). 

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Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

NETS is an employer-led public/private nonprofit partnership dedicated to improving the safety and health of employees, their families, and members of the communities in which they live and work, by decreasing the number of traffic crashes that occur both on and off the job.

NETS was founded in 1989 by private-sector employers and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to keep America's workforce safe on the road. The organization exists because motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury in the workplace and for people 4 to 34 years of age. Crashes both on and off the job have far-reaching financial and psychological effects on employees, their co-workers and families, and employers.

NETS is committed to providing organizations with "best practices" in developing or improving their driver safety programs and in promoting education and outreach programs for employees to support and encourage safe driving practices. For further details, visit the NETS Web site, www.trafficsafety.org.