

BY GARY SHAPIRO

FLEET SAFETY

FOR THE PEST CONTROL INDUSTRY



More than 1,300 workers die each year from crashes on public highways, and more than 300 workers die each year from crashes off road, on private roadways, or on industrial premises, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Based on those statistics, it's not surprising that driving is one of the leading causes of work related fatalities in the United States. There are a number of critical areas that all Pest Control operators with fleets should address to better control the risks associated with vehicle operations. Risk or fleet managers for nontraditional

truck fleets for example, often find it very difficult to control the risks associated with their fleets due to a lack of expertise, remoteness of operations, or operational challenges. In many cases they do not realize that their fleets would be considered to be sizable transportation companies if they were strictly fleet operators.

To help address and control the risks associated with vehicle operations, it's important to identify who is driving the motor units and when the vehicles are being used. This can include identifying when the vehicles are being driven for company related business, monitoring and controlling who drives the vehicles while at work, and employing a driver training program. A driver training program should be required of all drivers operating a company vehicle, but some remedial driver training can be used to target those drivers deemed as being a higher risk.

The first step in assessing a fleet program is to determine which positions require the use of a vehicle. Besides technicians, it is important to take into account those employees with jobs that seem more stationary, such as administrative personnel who may drive to the bank; office workers who pick up parts at the hardware store; and managers who on occasion drive to customer locations. By assessing the fleet program, it can identify these travels and offer opportunities to eliminate or consolidate these trips and possibly reduce the number of employees out on the road at any given time.

The next step in assessing a fleet program is establishing policies on where and when employees can use their vehicles for work, or for pleasure. When giving company cars for employees to use, it is important to set parameters so employees have a good understanding of how the vehicles are to be used. Be sure to ask yourself the following questions: Does the employee need to come back to the company lot at the end of the day or can the employee take them home? Is the personal use of the vehicle allowed and can it be used by other members of the family? Another important step to consider is reviewing the driving history of all individuals driving on company business. This is an important step in controlling who is allowed to drive on behalf of the organization. A motor vehicle record (MVR), which can usually be obtained from the department of motor vehicles within the issuing state of any driver with their permission, is one good way to do this.

The MVR provides a record about what types of vehicles the employee is licensed to drive, when these licenses were obtained, and any moving violations that the driver has been convicted of. History often repeats itself and most drivers do not change

their underlying habits behind the wheel of a company car. A driver with a number of recent minor violations, or a couple of significant moving violations will often use the same risky behaviors that got them convicted in the past while out driving for the company.

To help identify at-risk drivers, it is very useful to create objective criteria for reviewing MVR's. The criteria can include a maximum number of moving violations in the past few years (often the last three years) and a maximum number of critical violations in a somewhat longer period of time. Critical violations include driving under the influence, leaving the scene of an accident, and excessive speeding. The scoring mechanism can also take into account factors such as driver age, number of at fault vehicle crashes, and experience in the type of vehicle to be driven.

The MVR review can be used prior to authorizing a driver to use a vehicle on company business and then on a regular basis to identify changes in their driving record. Additional methods to identify high risk drivers can include supervised on-road driver observations, citizen complaints, and vehicle crash reviews. Many companies are also using telematic data, which can include information on vehicle speed, hard-brake events, and excessive acceleration that has been communicated directly from the vehicle to company officials.

Once a high risk driver has been identified, a decision must be made about whether to provide some form of disciplinary action or require remedial training. In many instances, the training is viewed as discipline by seasoned employees. The corrective action and/or training should be in accordance with the severity of the violation and documented. Many companies will require high risk drivers to complete defensive driver training and some have gone so far as to send their problematic drivers to attend structured courses at local skid pads. With any training, a documented knowledge check at the end of the course is very advisable.

In 2006, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) created the Z-15 standard for fleets. The standard was updated in 2012 to provide



additional insights and depth on critical driving hazards. It encapsulates many of the best practices for fleets. The Z-15 standard does an excellent job of explaining the roles of various entities within the organization with regard to fleet as well as a number of controls for improving fleet safety. Important components of the program include MVR review, policy development, and driver training.

For an expert consultation, please contact Weisburger Insurance Brokerage at 800-431-2794, info@weisburger.com, or visit our site at www.weisburger.com. Weisburger, a division of Program Brokerage Corporation, is the nationally endorsed insurance broker of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). With over 75 years of experience, our experts are able to review your current coverage and identify ways to best protect your pest control business during the dips and peaks of the industry. «

