

Safe Harbors

March 2009

A Loss Control And Risk Management Communication

If your operations involve transportation, a carefully planned and administered driver and vehicle safety program can make your operation more efficient, economical and safety conscious.



Drive Safely!

We are often told to “Drive Safely!” But, did you know that adopting better driving habits and defensive driving skills may actually save lives, time and money?

At your organization’s next staff meeting, we suggest you remind your drivers of the following tips for better, safer driving:

1. Buckle Up!

Utilize appropriate occupant restraint systems, such as seat belts. Make sure drivers and other (adult and older children) vehicle occupants buckle up using both lap and shoulder belts. Secure infants and young children in appropriate child safety seats and in the proper position in the vehicle. Fasten wheelchair tie-downs when transporting passengers with special needs.

2. Slow Down!

Exceeding the posted speed limit or driving at an unsafe speed is one of the most common driving errors and costs nearly \$41 billion annually, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Monitor your speed regularly. Consciously lower your speed when entering work zones and school zones.

3. Look Ahead!

Scan ahead to recognize hazards while you are driving. This habit helps you see and react faster if an oncoming vehicle crosses the center-line. If a vehicle is tailgating you, do not increase your speed. Slow down and let the other vehicle pass.

4. Back Off!

Maintain a three-second following distance. Three seconds often allows you time to see hazards, react to them, and

stop safely to avoid a crash. Don’t tailgate other vehicles.

5. Pay Attention!

Avoid driver distractions, such as talking on a cell phone, sending text messages, reading a map, adjusting radio controls, or eating. Driver distraction and drowsiness is a contributing cause in an estimated 80% of motor collisions and 65% of near crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

6. Rest Up!

Recognize when you are driving drowsy, and pull over to rest and get a good night’s sleep. Fatigue and drowsiness are often contributing factors in a high percentage of collisions. A fatigued driver may be just as dangerous as an impaired driver.

7. Plan Ahead!

Use time management when driving. Allocate “buffer time” just in case. If you are not going to make it on time, pull over and call ahead.

8. Calm Down!

Reduce aggressive driving behavior and avoid confrontations with other aggressive drivers by taking and maintaining self-control. The only person who can control your behavior behind the wheel is you. Other drivers may make you mad, but only you have the power to make your own decisions.

9. Know Your Conditions!

Be aware of your driving conditions and make the necessary adjustments. At least four driving conditions are beyond your control: (1) light; (2) weather; (3) road; and (4) traffic.

10. Look Behind You!

Know your vehicle's blind spots and clearances, park defensively for easy exit, and, if possible, use a "spotter" before backing up. One out of four vehicle accidents can be blamed on poor techniques when backing up, according to the National Safety Council.

If your operations involve transportation, a carefully planned and administered driver and vehicle safety program can make your operation more efficient, economical and safety conscious. Consequently, we suggest that all organizations consider the following as part of an effective driver and vehicle safety program:

1. Establish a written "driver and vehicle safety program" and communicate it with your entire organization.
2. Designate an experienced person to have responsibility and authority for day-to-day supervision of the driver and vehicle safety program.
3. Have a structure to assure new driver

screening and selection, including reviews of driver motor vehicle records ("MVR").

4. Develop a program for on-going driver training.
5. Maintain driver and accident records, including a method for accident reporting, review and analysis for future accident prevention efforts.
6. Plan regular vehicle inspections and maintenance, as well as driver-conducted and documented pre-trip and post-trip vehicle inspections (via checklist) with a reporting process of maintenance concerns.
7. Establish policies for "hired and non-owned" autos, including a requirement for drivers who use their own vehicle on behalf of your organization to demonstrate proof of personal insurance on an appropriate periodic basis.
8. Keep the driver and vehicle safety program "in front" of drivers, through

educational materials, promotional ideas, and regular driver safety meetings.

9. Provide positive reinforcement of safe driving practices, perhaps through incentives and rewards.
10. Conduct regular (annual) management review and, if necessary, modification of the driver and vehicle safety program to help meet goals and objectives.

Riverport's loss control consultants are available to assist you with the overall development of your driver and vehicle safety program. Contact us today.



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Home Office:

222 South Ninth Street, Suite 1300
Minneapolis, MN 55402-3332
Main Line: 612.766.3100
Fax: 612.766.3099
Toll Free: 888.762.3083

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 948
Minneapolis, MN 55440-0948

www.riverportinsurance.com

Western Region Office

101 Rowland Way, Suite 315
Novato, CA 94945-5008
Main Line: 415.898.9600
Fax: 415.898.9656
Toll Free: 800.361.1075

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