

# White Paper

## Why You Should Give Your Safety Program a Driver-First Orientation

Every fleet needs to cultivate safe driving skills. Even if driving is a secondary function for your employees — a means to visit a client or travel to a work site, for example — that doesn't mean it's any less important.

A driver-first safety program needs to reflect that drivers, not their vehicles, are the most important asset of your fleet. How your company treats its drivers should reflect this: from training and policies to rewards and penalties.

Every company that runs a fleet should have, as a first step, a safety program that puts the drivers first, motivating and inspiring them to perform better and be safer.

Safety matters. The statistics show that driver safety is a huge issue for both individuals and employers:

- Traffic crashes are the No. 1 cause of death and injury in the workplace, according to the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS)
- Crashes cost employers more than \$60 billion every year in the US
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 80 percent of all crashes and 65 percent near-crashes are caused by driver inattention

### Why Put Drivers First?

Research shows that employees who feel happy and engaged in their work are safer employees.

A recent meta-analysis of 49,928 business units covering more than 1 million employees looked at the relationship between engagement and nine different outcomes, including safety incidents, across 192 sectors.

It found that the business units that scored in the top 25 percent for employee engagement had 49 percent fewer safety incidents than those in the bottom quarter.

If employees feel their work is appreciated by the company, that their wellbeing matters, and that safety is at the heart of the company's culture, they are more likely to put in the effort needed to meet safety standards.

This has a halo effect throughout the whole company. Employees who take pride in their work are more likely to take care of their equipment, such as a vehicle, put under their care, and alert managers quickly to any problems.





These engaged employees will have more loyalty to a company that treats them well and are less likely to leave. Again, research demonstrates that new hires are the drivers most at risk of having accidents — while veteran employees (particularly those who feel they have a stake in the company) have far fewer.

There is also a sound business case for a driver-first safety program. Feeling valued at work also increases productivity: a study from the University of Warwick found that productivity is improved by 12 percent if employees are happy.

So an investment into creating a driver-first safety program will show big benefits further down the line. Savings will be made around costs associated with recruitment, equipment, and accidents.

In short, when drivers are put first, everyone wins.

### Safety-First Hiring Process

Driver-first thinking should start before a new driver is even recruited.

High turnover in any company isn't just inefficient but expensive. A study from the Center for American Progress estimates that replacing an employee earning \$50,000 or less costs the company around 19.7 percent of that employee's annual salary.

Experienced employees are safer employees. A study from the U.S. Department of Transportation found that drivers who have under five years of experience are 41 percent more likely to cause a crash than those with more experience.

So an effective safety program should begin before a driver is even recruited, in order to both find the best drivers and make sure that they want to stay.

It should:

- Include all the official pre-employment checks required by law, including motor vehicle record (MVR) check, background check, and any state licenses for any obvious risk factors
- Have a driver training program that's a combination of classroom, online, and behind-the-wheel experience
- Ensure that interviewees are informed about the company's safety culture and high standards of driving.

### Getting the Training Right

It almost goes without saying, every fleet should have a safety program in place. This should include training for all new hires.

### The High Cost of Accidents

How your drivers behave costs money — and lives. Here's how the different reckless driver behavior adds up, costing society billions:

- Speeding - \$8.4 billion
- Distracted driving - \$8.2 billions
- Alcohol - \$6 billion
- Not wearing a seatbelt - \$4.9 billion

(Source <http://trafficsafety.org/road-safety-resources/drive-safety-work-week/>)

### What Is a Fleet Accident Packet?

Even the safest driver is likely to experience a crash at one point in his or her career. This is why the driver needs to be prepared, and one way to do so is to make sure every driver has an accident packet in his or her vehicle at all times.

An accident packet contains driver-first documents, which drivers carry to use in the event of an accident. They contain all the information a driver needs about what to do if he or she is involved in an accident, including:

- What details on location and driving conditions need to be gathered
- How to document who was involved
- Who to contact at the fleet or accident management company

It's vital to have such a document on hand so that drivers know what details to collect and collect them as soon as possible.

A good packet is simple, intuitive, and very clear, and is tailored to fit a fleet's specific safety needs. Making sure that drivers are aware of their fleet safety packets, and how to use them should be part of ongoing training.

If driving isn't the primary role of the new hire, driver safety training will sometimes be delayed until the new employee has been in his or her position for some time. But it should be seen as an absolute priority.

### Follow these six steps when training a new hire:

1. Ensure that all relevant and legally required checks are carried out, including the MVR.
2. Recognize that this is the best opportunity the company is likely to have to instill its safety culture and policies into its new hires. Training needs to be planned carefully to ensure maximum benefits to both drivers and the company.
3. Include an extensive overview of the fleet's safety policies, including all the safety practices to which drivers are expected to conform: for example, keeping a safe following distance to avoid a collision from behind, or devising a realistic schedule, which won't put the driver under pressure to speed.
4. Ensure that the new hire has read/listened to and understood the information by giving a written test at the end of the training.
5. Help the driver understand his or her role within the company, and that his or her safety and wellbeing are at the heart of the company's purpose and mission. While acknowledgement and testing are best practice, safety should also be placed at the heart of the training presentation as something that benefits drivers, rather than being an inconvenience. It must be a core value and a positive part of the company culture.
6. Aim to empower drivers and motivate them to perform well and safely. Few of us feel the need to make extra effort if we're unaware of how that effort will be rewarded: drivers are no different.

### Ongoing Training

Although initial training and orientation are vital, they are just the beginning. Ongoing training is an essential part of a driver-first culture.

Any driver, however dedicated, will tend to slip into bad habits if training is not regularly refreshed, and its importance emphasized.

However, it's important to think about how this training is delivered more effectively to a highly mobile workforce, and what form a refresher might take. Best practices include a mix of methods, such as:



- Regular e-mails
- Short videos to remind drivers of safety best practices
- Distribution of company newsletters

In short, if there's an opportunity to deliver key safety messages in any communication — whether it's a poster in the lunchroom or an email from the CEO — don't ignore it. Delivering the message is one thing; reinforcing it is another.

### **Make Accountability Matter**

The fleet safety policy should have a reward-penalty structure, with clear steps of escalation up to and including firing. The company needs to clearly communicate the consequences of unsafe behavior to drivers, and make clear their responsibilities on the road.

Encouraging accountability might include regular safety policy updates, which drivers must read and acknowledge. But a driver-centered policy document must be clear and transparent, and in a form that drivers understand but will also want to follow.

While rewards are important, consequences have their place as well. Awareness of a potential penalty can help drivers stay alert to their responsibilities—reducing accidents.

For example, a recent study covering 45 leading companies and 400,000 vehicles, sponsored by Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, found that the top safety performers were at companies that not only had a total ban on mobile phone use at the wheel, but were also far more likely to terminate a driver for violating that policy.

Naturally, it should be made absolutely clear that serious offences — reckless driving, driving under the influence, or speeding using their phone while driving, for example — will have serious penalties, and there's zero tolerance for such behavior within the company.

Drivers who commit smaller offences or exhibit risky behaviors should be subject to remedial training and/or other penalties that escalate up to firing for repeat or increasingly serious offenses.

### **And the Winner Is**

Just offering rewards isn't the answer to improving driver safety. It's a complex issue and there's no single, simple way to improve it.



A company with a good driver-first safety program tackles safety with a whole range of techniques and programs, from good training to accountability measures to continual monitoring.

Adding rewards or bonuses can be a powerful ingredient in that mix, if they're used correctly. They encourage drivers to regulate their own behavior and can foster a sense of achievement and friendly, productive competition.

However, they can also cause problems. A driver who wants the reward but isn't prepared to make the effort may well find ways to get around the desired behavior.

Here is where telematics can come into play, making it far easier to monitor how an employee is driving. A system of scorecards produced by telematics units could, for example, form the basis for a program that rewards drivers for driving well.

If a fleet doesn't use telematics, fleet managers need to be careful how driving-related rewards are structured, and not have the unintended consequence of fostering risky behaviors. For example, improving the number of appointments a technician makes each day is a reasonable goal, but without an accurate way of measuring it, drivers may be engaging in risky behavior to get to each appointment faster.

If information about rewards is not communicated correctly, it can lead to discontent. And again, a rewards scheme must be underpinned with a strong safety culture.

It's vital to be very clear about what the reward or bonus is, what it will be awarded for, and how performance is to be monitored. For example, would a reward be awarded for successfully completing training? For having an MVR record that meets a certain, clearly stated standard? For developing good habits, such as wearing a seatbelt or not idling? Or would drivers be assessed on their general driving behavior on random days, by observers?

### **How to Create an Effective Safety Policy**

Even the most well-designed training can't be effective unless the policies underlying it are clear, focused, and well presented. Formulating these policies give the company the opportunity to put the driver front and center. Here's how to do it:

Bring in outside expertise. A specialist fleet safety provider, such as CEI, can help set up a fleet safety program that will resonate with drivers. It will be able to bring its own established systems to the fleet, and also provide services such as training, loss recovery, and fleet accident management.



Make policies people-centered. A policy designed to increase productivity, for example, may make more money for the company, but at the expense of a driver's wellbeing — such as insisting on more client calls than can be safely managed. That means more costs for the company further down the line, when the driver leaves or has an accident due to fatigue or driving recklessly.

Make policies clear. Policies must be communicated effectively to drivers, and it must be clear how the policy will benefit the driver in the long term. This gives drivers the knowledge to do their job well and safely, and the understanding to make the right decision at the right time.

Treat your safety policy as a living document, reviewing and updating it regularly. A safety policy is not a one-and-done process. It must be revisited regularly and updated when necessary. For fleets committed to a driver-first policy, the review should be done in the context of the drivers and how it will both hold them accountable and engage and motivate them to drive more safely.

Remember – commitment needs to be there. Whatever components make up a fleet safety policy, the most important will always be that commitment to safety at the heart of company culture, and the will to communicate that to drivers. If those don't exist, no amount of policies will make a difference.

### **About CEI**

From its origins in the collision repair business in Philadelphia in 1976, CEI has become a fleet industry leader through its clear vision of service excellence and its record of innovation in fleet accident repair. As a result, our hard-earned reputation is one of exceeding customer expectations while delivering cutting-edge fleet accident repair solutions.

In 1983, we entered the fleet accident management business as one of the industry's pioneers, and within a few years, we added rental vehicle, loss recovery and vehicle remarketing services. In the 1990s, we transitioned to a digital technology infrastructure, built by our team of IT professionals. And in 2003, we launched our fleet driver safety business, DriverCare. Today, DriverCare 5.0 offers more ways for fleets to monitor, assess, train and intervene with their primary and secondary drivers than any other online fleet safety application.

Accident prevention and management is CEI's only business. Our proven ability to save fleets millions of dollars and prevent more than 1,000 accidents every year is the reason our fleet accident repair business has grown so fast. Our loyal customer base now numbers some of North America's largest fleets and fleet

management companies, with more than 900,000 vehicles under management, 250,000 drivers enrolled in DriverCare, and who ask us to handle more than 250,000 claims every year – a volume that enables us to deliver unsurpassed levels of fleet accident repair service and economies of scale.

**Want to find out how you could save with CEI's accident management and fleet safety services? Simply need expert advice about a complicated fleet accident or driver safety problem? Click here (<http://www.ceinetwork.com/services/>) for no-obligation support from our fleet driver management professionals!**



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[www.ceinetwork.com](http://www.ceinetwork.com)

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The CEI Group  
4850 East Street Road  
Suite 200  
Trevose, PA 19053  
(877) 234-0378