

# Motor Vehicle Safe Driving Program

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Vehicle manufactures continue to make improvements on safety equipment on the vehicles they manufacture. Airbags, vehicle alert systems, voice commands and headlights that move in the direction the driver is steering, occupant safety continues to be a priority. Even with the new technology, vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of workplace fatalities. No other type of workplace accident is even close.

Impaired driving distracted driving and the mere lack of experience remain three of the leading factors in vehicle crash deaths. Other lesser causes are vehicle, roadway, and weather conditions.

According to the Highway Safety-Highway Loss Data Institute, Louisiana consistently leads the nation in both traffic fatalities per 100,000 citizens and personal injuries. A significant number of the accident investigations concluded that impaired or distracted driving contributed to the accident.

Nationally, approximately forty percent of all workplace fatalities are a result of transportation crashes. As the U.S. economy improves, traffic crashes and fatalities tend to increase. A struggling economy results in fewer traffic deaths; however, even during a declining or weak economy, traffic crashes continue to be the leading cause of workplace accident deaths.

Every business, even with the smallest fleet, should implement a corporate motor vehicle safe driving program.

## Small Fleets:

A corporate motor vehicle safe driving program for small fleets should include, but not be limited to motor vehicle records; mandatory seat belt policy; cell phone policy; maximum moving violations; vehicle accident investigation procedures.

- Motor vehicle records checks: provide information on driver trends. Moving violation citations are a clear indicator on a person's driving habits and should factor into management allowing the employee to drive a company vehicle or a personal vehicle for company business.
- Mandatory seat belt policy: studies conclude that wearing seat belts improve survival in motor vehicle crashes by up to 50%. Vehicles equipped with airbags not only increase the chances of survival in a motor vehicle crash; but also reduce the potential for serious bodily injuries. It is also essential for drivers to understand the difference between seat belts and airbags. A seat belt is a restraining device designed to keep occupants inside a vehicle in the event of vehicle crash. An airbag is a safety device that is intended to reduce the potential of trauma in a crash. A seat belt will protect occupants of motor vehicles, even without the use of an airbag. An airbag, however, is not intended to be used without the benefit of a seatbelt.



- Cell phone policy: the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that each day nine people are killed and 1,000 injured in vehicle crashes because of distracted driving. Management should restrict the use of cell phones when driving and strictly prohibit the use of personal electronic devices.

New drivers in Louisiana, with learner's permits or an intermediate driver's license, are prohibited from using a cell phone or other electronic device when driving. There is also a statewide ban on the use of wireless electronic devices for writing, sending, or reading text bases messages.

The State of Louisiana prohibits the use of cell phones when driving within school zones during posted school hours. It is against the law to make a phone call, text, or log into a social network. Exclusions include the following:

1. Report a traffic collision, medical emergency, or serious road hazard.
  2. Report a situation in which the person believes his personal safety is in jeopardy.
  3. Report or avert the perpetration or potential perpetration of a criminal act against the driver or another person.
  4. Operates a wireless telecommunications device while the motor vehicle is lawfully parked.
  5. Uses a wireless telecommunications device in an official capacity as an operator of an authorized emergency vehicle.
- Maximum moving violations: management should establish and enforce a maximum number of moving violations that are allowed. General industry standards are two moving violations within a three-year span.
  - Vehicle accident investigations: all vehicle crashes, regardless of the severity, should be investigated to determine the root cause of each motor vehicle crash. Vehicle condition, roadway conditions and driver behavior should factor heavily into the investigation.

## Large Fleets:

A more detailed safe driving program should be implemented for those companies that have large vehicle fleets:

- Senior Management Commitment & Employee Involvement: set policies for driving company vehicles and provide the necessary resources to promote vehicle safety.
- Written Policies and Procedures: specific guidelines through Best Practices for all employees to follow. Included in this portion of the program would be seat belt use, cell phone and electronic device prohibition.
- Driver Agreements: to document that all drivers will obey all traffic laws and local ordinances.
- Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) Checks: annually review with employees with a corporate policy on maximum moving violations within a specific time.



- Crash Reporting and Investigation: establishing protocol for vehicle accident reporting timeline and management review of the accident.
- Vehicle Selection, Maintenance, and Inspection: this would include both company vehicles and personal vehicles used for company use. Routine maintenance schedules should be established following manufacturer's recommendations.
- Disciplinary Action System: specific disciplinary action defined including, but not limited to driving privileges limited or revoked, demotion, suspension, or termination.
- Reward/Incentive Program: reward good driving behavior with incentives.
- Driver Training/Communication: regardless of any previous driving experience, every driver should be provided with training on safe driving practices and defensive driving.
- Regulatory Compliance: because some industries that are regulated by the local, state, and federal agencies, regulatory compliance programs should be included in any organization's safety driving program.

A comprehensive motor vehicle safe driving program is essential to reducing the potential of motor vehicle traffic deaths. A vehicle safety driving program could contribute to improved worker efficiency, save employers the cost of unnecessary medical and legal expenses, reduce employee lost time accidents, decrease losses in employee productivity and the expense of having to repair or replace a vehicle.

