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Do you have a safe driving policy?

Truck crashes on our roads in 2014 resulted in 772 people being injured and a further 67 people being killed. This was 23 percent of all recorded road deaths and seven percent of all reported injuries on our road. Yet trucks only make up 2.5 percent of the total vehicles on the road.

This is not to say that the fault for these road deaths and injuries lies solely with the heavy trucks and their drivers. Statistics show that truck drivers were primarily responsible for only 35 percent of the fatal crashes in which they are involved. But the fact is that these statistics are still sobering reading, and that the trucking industry can still play its part in reducing these fatalities and injuries on our roads.

One key step trucking operators can take towards improving the safety of their trucks on the road is to implement a safe driving policy that can be applied across their whole business. These, in turn, can be linked to your employment or sub-contractor agreements. This will help you to drive a road safety culture in your business.

Your safe driving policy should be defined by two key objectives:

- To ensure that employees and sub-contractors demonstrate safe, efficient driving skills and other good road safety habits at all times.
- To maintain all vehicles in a safe, clean and roadworthy condition at all times to ensure the maximum safety of the drivers, occupants and all other road users.

Your safe driving policy should include a code of conduct that states your business

expectations for employees and sub-contractors to comply with all traffic legislation, to be conscious of road safety, and your expectation that they will demonstrate safe driving and other good road safety habits. It should also list out the following actions that will be viewed as serious breaches of conduct, and that dismissal may be a consequence:

- Drinking or being under the influence of drugs while driving.
- Driving while disqualified or not correctly licenced.
- Reckless or dangerous driving causing death or injury.
- Failure to stop after a crash.
- Acquiring demerit points leading to licence suspension.
- Any actions that warrant the suspension of a licence.

Every driver is responsible and accountable for their own actions including the following:

- Ensure that they maintain a current licence for the class that they are driving, and that this is carried with them at all times.
- Immediately notify their manager or head contractor if their licence is suspended, cancelled, or has limitations placed on it.
- Behave with the highest level of professional conduct at all times.
- Carry out regular pre-trip inspections of their vehicle, and report any faults immediately.
- Comply with all legislation and rules

when on duty including land transport and health and safety Legislation.

- Always comply with the code of conduct.
- Always maintain speed to the appropriate conditions, including operating within the speed limits.
- Always wear a seatbelt, and never use a mobile phone whilst driving.
- Don't tailgate other drivers.
- Be aware of your vehicles blind spots.
- Always comply with the worktime and log book rules.
- Ensure that your load is secured in accordance with the truck loading code.
- Report any infringements, near misses or crashes immediately.

As an employer you have a number of responsibilities that include:

- Ensuring that all vehicles under your control are well maintained and legally compliant and are safe to operate on the road at all times.
- Fitting all vehicles with the appropriate safety equipment, including fire extinguisher and first aid kit, and that drivers are properly trained in the use of this equipment.
- Follow up on all reported maintenance issues.
- Ensure that all drivers are legally compliant at all times.
- Ensure that all drivers are properly trained as safe drivers, and are properly trained to perform their duties.



- Ensure that drivers schedules allow them sufficient time to comply with the worktime and log book rules.
- Recognise the signs of driver fatigue.
- Ensuring that all vehicles are fit for the purpose intended.
- Ensure that all drivers have a thorough induction into the companies road safety policies and procedures.
- Ongoing driver training should be normal business practice.
- Put your drivers through the Truck Roll Over Prevention Programme.
- Run regular staff seminars or tool

box sessions to update drivers on road safety, fatigue, and health and safety.

To reinforce good safe driving behaviour, it is also important that those employers:

- Don't pay speeding or other infringement fines.
- That they lead by good example.
- Have a zero tolerance for using mobile phone when driving or not wearing seatbelts. The impact of these is severe on your ORS rating.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle. Provide free bottles of water and fruit at workplaces.

Regularly review your safe driving policy to ensure that it is supporting your businesses key road safety objectives. Your success can be measured by the number of truck crashes your vehicles are involved in, by the number of traffic infringements received, and by the cost of your repairs and maintenance costs. If these measures are reducing then you are on the road to success, if not then you need to revisit the whole issue to see where you are going wrong. ■

References: References Ministry of Transport and NZ Transport Agency

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