

Driver safety on and off the job

Fleet safety

More than 42,000 people die in crashes every year on U.S. roads. That comes to about 115 deaths every day – or nearly five deaths every hour. Many of those deaths are the result of incidents that take place during the workday or during the commutes to and from work.

Employers absorb the brunt of costs for injuries that occur both on and off the job through lost work days and insurance premiums. Whether you manage a fleet of vehicles, oversee a mobile sales force or employ commuters, implementing a driver safety program can help you save on costs and prevent injuries for your employees and their loved ones.

Distracted driving

At least eight people a day are killed in distraction-affected crashes. Many employers have enacted cell phone driving policies, but cell phones aren't the only source of distractions on the road: calls, texts, vehicle touchscreens, food and even other passengers can create dangerous distractions. Employers should adopt a strong distracted driving policy asking employees to:

- Program/start GPS equipment, music or podcasts while the vehicle is safely parked
- Set cell phones to Do Not Disturb and/or silence notifications while driving

- Inform clients, associates and business partners that calls will be returned when employees are not driving
- Pull over safely and park before taking calls, sending texts/emails, or adjusting GPS/music/podcasts

Many people drive distracted even when they know about the risks. This can sometimes be due to pressure to respond or remain productive even while driving. A strong distracted driving policy sets the expectation that when employees are behind the wheel, their only job is to drive.

Impaired driving

Impaired driving has been a leading cause of U.S. traffic deaths for decades and includes more than just drugs and alcohol. Impairment might be caused by stress, fatigue and distraction that can prevent workers from being their best at work and while driving.

Distracted and fatigued drivers show signs of impairment similar to those of an intoxicated driver. Sending or reading a text for just a few seconds, for example, is equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded. Meanwhile, more than one in three workers report being fatigued, and losing even two hours of sleep is similar to the effect of having three beers.



Avoiding any type of substance before and while driving is crucial to avoiding these risks, as is always getting enough sleep to feel rested. On long trips, schedule regular breaks and, if needed, pull over safely to take a nap or drink a caffeinated beverage.

New and existing safety technologies can also help, but only if they are used properly. Drowsiness Alert and Lane Departure Warning, for example, can detect common drowsy driving patterns and warn drivers to stay in their lane or take a break. Check out MyCarDoesWhat.org to learn more about the latest vehicle safety technologies.

Speeding

Speeding is a major factor in traffic crashes, as it reduces a driver's reaction time, increases a vehicle's stopping distance and reduces the effectiveness of safety structures like guardrails. Speeding also increases the odds of injury and death in a crash, particularly in crashes involving pedestrians. In addition to speeding, frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating, and running red or yellow lights can create dangerous situations for all road users.

If you notice yourself speeding, slow down, increase your following distance and focus on being a defensive driver. If other drivers are aggressive, safely put distance between your vehicles and avoid retaliating in any way.

Remember, your loved ones are counting on you to get home safe and everyone else on the road is counting on you to help them do the same.

Buckle up for safety

Over 90% of drivers and passengers in the U.S. wear their seat belts, yet more than half of vehicle occupants killed in crashes are unbuckled. Seat belts are simple, inexpensive, and effective at saving lives and preventing injuries. And employees who get in the habit of buckling up at work are more likely to do so off the clock.

Bottom line: No organization can afford to ignore traffic safety. Use these simple steps to get to your destination safely.

