Occupational Driving Safety Programs

The Roadway Workplace

The Vehicle

The Driver

The Environment

Workplace Program
Transportation-related incidents are the leading cause of work-related fatalities in Texas. Employers should consider four driving safety elements when creating an occupational driving safety program: the roadway workplace, the driver, the vehicle, and the environment.

Limiting the Risk

A lot of jobs and businesses require employees to drive or work near vehicles, which exposes them to potentially dangerous roadway hazards. Roadways and work zones are probably the most dangerous part of the work environment for those employees.

To make workplaces safer, the Texas Division of Workers' Compensation encourages employers to implement effective occupational driving safety programs that address the following hazards. Review your occupational driving safety program at least once a year, or when your workplace changes.

The Roadway Workplace

If your employees are in a motorized vehicle as part of their jobs, you should consider the vehicles and roadways an extension of your workplace. Create and enforce written safety programs and policies for working in and around motor vehicles.

- **Driver Policies and Safety Programs.** Specify the qualifications that employees who drive for work will need, and include policies for the elements of the program. Consider qualifications for commercial and non-commercial drivers, and specify those in the policies. Driver qualifications may include a valid Texas driver license; a minimum number of moving violation convictions; and completed driving skills assessments.

- **Motor Vehicle Record Checks.** Review the driver license status and driving records of employees who operate motor vehicles. Using pre-hire record checks and periodic checks after hiring can help ensure safe employee driving behaviors.

- **Driver Assessments.** Consider these options for assessing driving skills: pre-hire driver screening tests; in-vehicle monitoring systems; driver observation; third-party vendors for testing driving skills; or having employees shadow drivers experienced with specialized motor vehicle operations, such as hauling equipment or driving large vehicles.

- **Journey Management.** Employees and employers should assess the need for and risks of each work-related trip. Less travel means less risk. If an employee must drive, choose the safest route, time of day, vehicle, and best weather conditions for each trip. Employees and supervisors should make sure each trip meets business needs in the safest way possible.

- **Applicable Laws.** Learn the federal, state, and local laws for operating motor vehicles. A good occupational driving safety program will support and emphasize all safety regulations.

The Driver

If your employees drive on the job, you should be aware of common causes of roadway crashes and injuries so you can help prevent them.

- **Distracted Driving.** Address how to avoid distractions. Drivers must be alert and focused on driving to prevent vehicle collisions. Any other activity is a distraction. It only takes a second of inattention for a crash to occur.

  Distractions include: talking on the phone, texting, watching videos, eating, drinking, smoking, reading, applying makeup or other personal grooming, reaching for something, focusing on passengers, or distractions outside the vehicle.

  Safety programs should include compliance with state and local laws for electronic devices. Texting while driving is illegal in Texas, except in certain circumstances. The fine is up to $99 for a first-time offense and $200 for repeat offenses. Some cities have stricter laws.

- **Seat Belt Use.** Every employee in a motorized vehicle should wear the proper restraint. Wearing a seat belt helps keep occupants from being ejected in a crash and increases the chances of surviving by 45 percent. In pickup trucks, that number jumps to 60 percent, as pickups are twice as likely to roll over in a crash.

- **Impaired Driving.** Any employee who operates a motor vehicle at work should understand the dangers of driving while impaired by alcohol, illegal drugs, prescription drugs, or over-the-counter medications. While drug and alcohol testing is required for some driver licenses, employers should consider testing all employees who drive or are involved in motor vehicle accidents to prevent this behavior. Employers should review the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's guidance on employee drug testing.

- **Fatigued Driving.** Tired drivers can be just as dangerous as impaired drivers. They have slower reaction times and can fall asleep quickly. Consider the effects of long, evening, or nighttime shifts when making driving assignments. Avoid unnecessary travel and make alternative driving arrangements for employees too tired to drive. Options include assigning drivers, taking public transportation, or using taxis or ride-sharing services. Employees should know how important it is to get enough sleep before driving.
Wellness/Fitness to Drive. Consider the health and fitness of employees who drive. While some driver licenses require medical assessments, any employee who operates a motorized vehicle should be healthy enough to drive effectively. Develop job descriptions that accurately reflect the skills and abilities needed, such as reaction time and maneuvering. Employees should understand that food choices and use of prescription and over-the-counter medications can make them less alert when they drive.

Driver Training. Employees who operate motorized vehicles on the job must be trained in all aspects of your occupational driving program. The training should explain the risks of driving and the need to treat the vehicle and roadway as part of the workplace. At a minimum, training should cover:
- employer occupational driving policies;
- seat belt use;
- distracted driving;
- impaired driving;
- fatigued/fit driving;
- knowing where to look and the importance of focus while driving;
- how to operate and maneuver the type of vehicle employees will be driving;
- the importance of sharing the road with other vehicles, and those vehicles' limitations;
- aggressive driving;
- defensive driving skills;
- how to avoid rear-end, backing, and sideswipe collisions;
- tips for driving in poor weather;
- tips for checking road conditions; and
- vehicle maintenance.

The Vehicle

If your company has a fleet of vehicles, or if employees drive personal or leased vehicles as part of their jobs, make sure the vehicles are mechanically sound and operating properly.

Operating Different Types of Motor Vehicles. Employees who drive should have the skills needed or be trained to operate the types of vehicles they use for work. They should also be trained to understand the maneuverability and capabilities of other vehicles on the road or in a construction zone, including commercial motor vehicles, utility vehicles and passenger vehicles, heavy equipment, and motorcycles.

Vehicle Maintenance. Establish vehicle maintenance programs that include inspection, repair, and preventive maintenance. If employees use personal vehicles at work, consider the condition of those vehicles and their maintenance.

The Environment

Prepare employees for conditions outside the vehicles they use at work.

Poor Weather Conditions. Driving in rain, wind, and other inclement weather can affect a driver’s reaction time and vehicle performance. Before a trip, drivers should check weather forecasts and avoid poor weather if possible.

Road Conditions. Flooding, icing, or other severe weather can damage road structure or surfaces, leaving them unstable and creating dangerous driving situations. Motor vehicle crashes or a large volume of traffic can also weaken bridges and other structures.

Also, road construction projects can change road surfacing, speed limits, and lane placement. Road changes, such as uneven lanes, potholes, closed shoulders, and road grading, can be dangerous, so plan ahead to handle unfavorable road conditions when you can’t avoid them. Employees who drive can research road conditions on an upcoming trip by checking local and state traffic reports and highway conditions.

Work Zone Safety. Employees in work zones are also vulnerable to the hazards of moving motorized vehicles. These employees should wear highly visible personal protective equipment (PPE). Vehicles used in and around work zones should have markings and lights to make them visible to other employees and passing motorists. Work zones should have highly visible signs posted to inform those traveling in or near the zone of dangers. Consult the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices from the Texas Department of Transportation for more information.

Employees traveling through work zones should remain alert to roadway changes and follow all speed limit signs and directions.

Other Drivers. An effective occupational driving safety program should set employer expectations for safe driving habits and prepare employees for encountering the bad driving habits of others. Teach employees to anticipate other motorists’ actions, to avoid aggressive drivers, and to drive defensively.