

Fleet Management Basics

The real cost of running vehicles doesn't show up on most balance sheets. Each year, over 3000 people are killed and almost a quarter of a million are injured in traffic accidents in Canada. Up to one third of these accidents involve someone who is at work at the time. The cost is staggering. The expense to repair vehicles and pay for physical injuries totaled \$9.5 billion in 2004.

And that's not all. Studies show that only 50% of the actual cost of these collisions is covered by insurance. The loss of time, loss of potential business, damage to your company's reputation, as well as the human suffering and financial costs to employees and their families are just some of these expenses, and most are not recoverable.

In fact, we believe that the risks faced and created by employees driving as part of their work is the biggest single safety issue to be managed by many organizations.

TODAY'S LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Owner's Liability

As an owner of a commercial vehicle, you have certain legal responsibilities for the drivers of that vehicle, which are laid out in both provincial legislation and case law.

You are liable for any properly licensed person that is operating your vehicle with your consent and vicariously liable as an employer of anyone driving a vehicle in the course of their employment. In this context, vicarious means liable by virtue of your relationship as an employer.

Many provinces have enacted legislation relating to the liability for spills of substances or products in transit. Fines and clean-up costs which may be imposed in these situations can be very high.

Factors Influencing Court Decisions

In order to avoid potential liability for an collision, it is important that:

- a vehicle be properly maintained.
- that the operator of that vehicle is well trained and well rested.
- comprehensive records are kept. These records will be used in a court proceeding as evidence that will be necessary to avoid liability.

How thoroughly you have considered these issues and kept adequate documentation will influence the success of your defense against a lawsuit brought against you as an owner of the vehicle.

FLEET OWNERS' COMMITMENTS

Your fleet of vehicles may be a key component in operating your business successfully and profitably and is probably one of your major expenses. The first step is to approach this part of your business with a commitment to operate it safely, cost effectively and knowledgeably. Are you prepared to manage your fleet so that you require all your drivers to do the following?:

Vehicle Checks

1. Before driving, take a second to examine
 - The area around the vehicle, (looking for objects, vehicles, etc.).
 - The vehicle itself to ensure it is mechanically safe.
2. As a driver, be responsible for the safety and care of passengers, and all others on the road.

Planning Safety Strategy

3. If conditions (e.g., driver, weather, road, traffic, vehicle) will compromise safety, consider alternative arrangements.
4. Plan and utilize the safest possible routes to reduce the risk of collision.

Alert, Calm and Prepared

5. Driving requires full attention, therefore always allow ample time and minimize distractions.
6. Control emotions and exercise courtesy in spite of the aggressive and careless actions of others.

Positioning the Vehicle

7. When driving under normal conditions, anticipate situations that may become potentially dangerous and act to prevent a collision from occurring.
8. When caught in hazardous road conditions adjust driving to address the potential hazards.

Communication

9. While driving, ensure actions are predictable to all others including drivers and pedestrians.

Obeying the Law

10. Obey all rules of the road.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Being prepared for an emergency while driving, be it a collision, illness or breakdown of the vehicle, ensures the safety of your drivers. A properly equipped emergency kit can go along way towards minimizing the effects of a driver being stranded or hurt.

The following equipment should be considered for each of your vehicles:

- First Aid kit including gauze, dressing, dressing tape, bandages, tweezers, scissors, safety pins, alcohol wipes, cold packs, reflective rescue blanket and first aid manual
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Jumper cables
- Tow chain or rope
- Flares or battery operated warning lights
- Properly inflated spare tire, jack and wheel wrench
- Bag of sand or kitty litter and traction mats
- Fire extinguisher
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Ice scraper, snow brush and small shovel
- Commercial deicer
- Tools: screw driver, wrench and pliers
- Cloth or roll of paper towels
- Non-perishable food items, such as snack bar
- Bottled water
- Maps and compass
- Axe or hatchet
- Pocket knife
- Box of facial tissue
- For long distance trips, extra cloths, mittens, socks, hats and extra winter boots
- Cellular phone for emergency calls.
(Use phone when car is not in motion)

With commitment, forethought and planning, the risks and costs of managing your fleet of vehicles can be minimized. It is not only your responsibility to ensure safe operation of your vehicles, it is just good business.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please contact your Aviva Broker for a copy of the "Aviva Fleet Management Guide" and copies of the "In case of Accident Booklets".

Please also see Aviva Hardfacts:
Fleet Management – The Driver (A-5588)
Fleet Management – The Vehicle (A-5589)
Fleet Management – The Journey (A-5590)