Driver Safety
The First Step to a Safer Fleet
The cost of unsafe driving behavior

High procurement and operating costs mean fleets are constantly looking for savings and profit opportunities. We often think of achieving these by increasing productivity, reducing expenses, and mitigating vehicle downtime. However, one of the most overlooked costs of operating a fleet, regardless of industry or size, is driver safety.

Why safety?

A company’s greatest asset is its employees—the culture, the competitive advantages, and the ability to drive businesses forward begins and ends with human capital. Tragically, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for all ages, and for fleets, this is a major concern.¹ Accidents that happen on and off the job "have far-reaching financial and psychological effects on employees, their co-workers, family, and employers."¹ This is why investing in your employees’ safety and well-being is essential.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), and U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) strongly believe all fleets should have a safety program in place for their employees. The purpose of a driver safety program is to 1) save lives and reduce the risk of life-altering injuries, 2) protect your organization’s human and financial resources, and 3) guard against potential company and personal liabilities.¹ Driver safety programs can also act as a positive employee relations tool while simultaneously enhancing a company’s fleet safety.

Direct costs

The cost of ignoring safety can lead to expensive medical fees, court litigation, and in some cases, businesses being shut down. Employers collectively pay $60 billion annually for motor vehicle crashes involving their employees, and OSHA reports that each fatal car crash can exceed a payout of $500,000.¹ Furthermore, accidents can increase employee benefits costs such as workers’ compensation, social security, and health and disability insurance.

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Indirect costs

In addition to direct costs, indirect costs can take a toll on fleets’ operations and may not be easy to account for. A fleet’s productivity is significantly impacted when vehicles must undergo replacement or maintenance repairs. Beyond the impact to assets, administrative costs can quickly add up when the employee(s) is unable to work. There may also be instances where the company’s brand equity is negatively impacted due to the inability to meet customer service requirements, loss of business, or bad publicity. Other examples of indirect costs¹ potentially facing supervisors and fleet managers include:

- Rescheduling or making special arrangements
- Fleet manager’s time to coordinate vehicle repair/replacement
- Reassignment of personnel to cover for missing employee(s)
- Overtime pay to cover work of missing employee(s)
- Re-entry and retraining of injured employee(s)
- Administrative costs (documentation of injuries, treatment, absences)
- Accident investigation costs

Potential direct and indirect costs of vehicle collisions for fleets

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Statistics reported by OSHA¹
**Driver safety**

The United States Department of Labor reports that “every 12 minutes someone dies in a motor vehicle crash, every 10 seconds an injury occurs, and every 5 seconds a crash occurs.” Just as alarming is the fact that many of these incidents occur on the job or during the daily commute. Whether you employ a fleet of professional drivers, a mobile sales team, or the average commuter, employers often bear the cost of work-related motor vehicle accidents. By developing and enforcing safe driving policies, employers can help reduce the risk to their employees, and to their bottom line.¹

A driver’s actions leading up to an accident will have the greatest impact on outcome and severity. There are times where drivers have little control over the circumstances, but NHTSA has found that 94% of car accidents are a result of what the driver did or did not do.⁶ This means that with proper coaching and safety measures in place, most accidents are avoidable. According to NETS, investing in road safety can reduce a fleet’s crash rate by 50%, which in turn protects the lives of employees as well as other drivers on the road.³
How can telematics improve safety?

Fleet telematics can be used to improve fleets’ safety performance. From safety rules and reporting to actionable information empowered by detailed reporting, telematics offers a wide spectrum of safety performance tools for all types of fleets.

Insurance benefits

Insurance companies have found the use of telematics can lead to a 45% drop in accidents which may translate to lower insurance rates. Telematics not only improves fleet safety, it can offer a direct return on investment by lowering costs associated with unnecessary insurance claims.

Exception rule–based driver feedback, also known as server-side feedback, is based on data that must first be processed by T-Mobile® SyncUP FLEET™ before alerting the driver. For example, a SyncUP FLEET device sends vehicle speed data to SyncUP FLEET to be compared with the posted road speed within the exception rule’s conditions. If those conditions are fulfilled, SyncUP FLEET triggers the audible response from the device. If the data transfer rate is slower than the communication rate between the SyncUP FLEET device and SyncUP FLEET portal, driver feedback may be delayed. Exception rule–based feedback can be set up for exception rules under the Rules and Groups tab in the Exceptions page.
What does driver safety do for your fleet?

The Driver Safety Scorecard Report focuses on three primary elements of unsafe driving: aggressive driving, seat belt usage, and speeding. The report does not consider distracted driving behavior; however, symptoms of distracted driving often overlap with other forms of unsafe driving.

Aggressive driving

Aggressive driving can emerge in different ways. There may be times where a driver is not focusing on the road ahead and accelerates hard to catch up to the moving traffic. Moreover, a driver might not be focusing on traffic ahead and may drive erratically to avoid a collision. Distracted driving can lead to aggressive driving behavior, even if accidental.

Traffic congestion

Another common frustration for drivers is traffic congestion. Most people do not like traffic because of the time strain it has on their personal lives, but for professional drivers, the negative effects of traffic congestion can have direct financial repercussions. Aside from the typical annoyances of spending long hours in traffic, drivers also feel their productivity is adversely affected. Drivers are often paid by the mile, and with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA) Hours of Service limitations to consider, drivers are inherently motivated to drive as far as they can in the least amount of time. When stuck in traffic, routes become less efficient, and attempts to make up for lost time can lead to aggressive driving behavior.¹

Speeding

Speeding has been a factor in over 30% of U.S. crash deaths since 2005.⁴ The NHTSA estimates the annual economic costs of speeding-related crashes to be $40.8 billion, with employers picking up an $8.4 billion chunk of this total.¹ Speeding is arguably the costliest form of unsafe driving to U.S. employers, and likewise the most preventable through telematics and proper coaching.
Posted road speed

SyncUP FLEET customers can define what constitutes speeding as part of their safe driving policy. SyncUP FLEET utilizes the posted road speeds from HERE WeGo maps and OpenStreetMap (OSM) to determine when drivers are exceeding speeds based on the conditions they set in the speeding exception rules.

There are some roads, usually ones that are more remote, where the map provider does not have sufficient data to guarantee the road speed. In these instances, the map provider estimates posted road speeds. SyncUP FLEET chooses the map provider with the most accurate road speed, but there is still a chance for the road speed in SyncUP FLEET to be estimated. Customers can choose to include or exclude estimated posted road speeds by toggling the ON/OFF switch for “Exclude estimated speed limits.” If this switch is set to ON, then the speeding rule conditions will exclude all estimated posted road speeds.

Questions? Click here to contact us about SyncUP FLEET.
References


