



WHITE PAPER

# Protecting your business through a comprehensive safety policy

## Overview

Within the U.S., accidents cost hundreds of billions of dollars each year. The average company sees at least 1 in 5 fleet vehicles involved in an accident every year, and vehicle accidents are the leading cause of work-related deaths today. In spite of the high cost of accidents—over \$16,000 per accident, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA)—and the importance of employee safety, Wheels research shows that a shocking 25-50% of companies with fleets do not have formal safety programs. Accidents also mean lost productivity—missed customer commitments or sales. Even so, many companies do not see fleet safety awareness as a high priority until one of their drivers is involved in a severe accident.

A well-managed safety program, such as the Wheels Safety First program, can reduce accidents by 10-20% and provide companies with the benefits of employee well-being, cost savings (medical and repair-related, not to mention litigation), driver productivity, fleet productivity and a positive corporate image.

## Establishing a program

There are five steps to achieving an effective and comprehensive corporate fleet safety program.

1. Develop a corporate vehicle safety policy
2. Provide appropriate and safe vehicles
3. Provide driver safety training
4. Monitor driver performance through motor vehicle record (MVR) checks both at-hire and on an ongoing basis
5. Promote driver safety through ongoing communications

## Policy guidelines

When implementing a safety program, there are many issues to consider and potentially incorporate into your policy. For instance:

- What is the scope of the policy? Will it pertain only to employees who drive company vehicles? Will it be applicable to employees who drive personal vehicles on company business?
- Is personal use of company vehicles allowed?
- Who is eligible to drive the vehicle? Only the employee? Spouses/dependents?
- Where can the vehicle be driven? Only on certain road types? Across state lines or country borders?
- Should prohibiting distractive behavior be a part of the policy? This includes cell phone use or eating while driving.
- What guidelines should be included for protecting the vehicle and its contents, such as hiding cell phones and computers to deter break-ins?
- Should rest requirements be implemented for all drivers, not just drivers of DOT-regulated vehicles?
- How often will MVRs be run on all drivers to ensure they have clean driving records? What are the consequences when drivers incur tickets?
- What are the expectations regarding the frequency of ongoing safety training?

## Promoting safety

Once the elements of your fleet safety program have been decided and included in your policy, they must be conveyed to your employee base. Communicating the importance of the program and sustaining awareness generally requires a joint effort among different functions like fleet, human resources and risk management. Success of your safety program depends on the support of senior management. Their support is crucial in showing that the organization cares for the well-being of its employees.

## Measuring the success of your safety program

Fleet management providers like Wheels can provide detailed reporting as part of your safety program. The program's success and benefit to your company can easily be measured by comparing progress versus the previous year, evaluating various internal groups or divisions, and comparing your fleet's performance versus industry-wide statistics.

## Conclusion

A formal safety program with a clear, comprehensive policy helps to protect your drivers and your business. It is crucial to educate drivers on the program and its policy. Safety training, driver record checks, and reporting should be ongoing to continually monitor and promote safe driving practices. Be sure to review the policy concerning vehicle and equipment use to ensure that your safety and fleet policies are in alignment.

**To learn more about implementing a safety program for your organization, please contact a member of your Wheels Account Team or e-mail us at [info@wheels.com](mailto:info@wheels.com).**