



Guidelines for developing a comprehensive driver training program

After you've hired an experienced and qualified driver, you'll need to provide training before they embark on their first trip. The question then becomes: How much training do drivers new to your operation actually need?

Federal (Canada Labour Code) and Provincial (Occupational Health and Safety Act) regulations clearly state that all employers must provide training for their employees – including those who are payroll based, contractors, sub-contractors, seasonal, agency, owner-operators and owner-operator drivers. To determine adequate quantity and quality of training delivered, it's important to develop a structured driver training program that covers all aspects of your operation.

Establish driver responsibility benchmarks

Evaluating the driver at the time of hire will provide a benchmark of their current understanding of their responsibilities, which will help your company determine the level of training required for that specific driver. Best in class companies do not take short cuts with training; they focus on the driver's responsibilities and provide comprehensive training in those areas.

Comprehensive driver instruction and remedial training

Aim to offer both practical and theory training, and consider alternate methods of delivery, such as online instruction along with classroom training. Conduct competency testing to confirm the driver's understanding, and provide remedial training to all drivers throughout their tenure with your company, which will help combat complacency and enhance their skill level.

Driver training topics

There are training topics that every company should provide to their drivers, such as:

- managing the specialized nature of the cargo being transported, to ensure safety and security;
- how to operate the type of equipment in the fleet safely and competently, and
- any regional, geographic and environmental challenges drivers may face.

Additional training topics could include:

Vehicle inspection – Most drivers know the basics, but a thorough pre-trip inspection will prevent major issues when on the road.

Driving best practices – Setting expectations and sharing best practices can reduce wear and tear on the equipment, improve fuel efficiency, reduce idle time, as well as prevent collisions and incidents.

Operations / dispatch procedures – Another area of training could include when to contact and who to communicate with for dispatch instructions. Training that involves your operations staff will provide the driver with a better understanding of the relationship between operations and the driver.

Trip routing and guidance systems – Company specified and jurisdictional designated routes are an important topic to consider as part of a training program. Ensure drivers (and operations staff) understand established routes and where to access this information. Advise drivers if the company provides GPS mapping devices and how to properly access specific truck routes.

Hours of service / Managing fatigue – Do drivers thoroughly understand the rules and regulations regarding hours of service? Can they complete a daily compliance log? It's important to let drivers know that they need to manage their fatigue and understand when to alert operations staff. Ensure they understand the importance of listening to their body and not just the regulations, as fatigue thresholds are different for everyone.

Fueling procedures – Set expectations for drivers so they know how, where and when to safely fuel the truck.

Health and wellness – A good diet, exercise and sharing mental health best practices (e.g. managing stress) will help keep a driver alert and ready to perform their daily duties. Address issues surrounding prescription drug use and what is permitted, along with training on your drug and alcohol policy, including the ramifications of violations.

Managing paperwork – How to properly prepare trip reports, mileage tracking, permits, bill of lading, border crossing documents, operating authorities, registration, and insurance and any other paperwork unique to your operation all require training. Consider making this a part of your structured program.

Dangerous goods – General and product-specific knowledge must be considered when transporting dangerous goods. Does the driver know how to deal with an incident?

Breakdown, collision or roadside incidents – Do your drivers know what to do in the event of any emergency? Advise on who they should call in the event of an incident, what details to report out, and what support mechanisms are in place.

Security – Training on how to ensure security of the truck and its cargo will help prevent theft or damage to equipment, cargo or buildings where pickup/drop-offs are made.

Equipment maintenance – Setting expectations for the frequency and location for service is an important aspect to consider as part of driver training. Advise on how to keep the vehicle clean by establishing best practices, as well as who the driver should contact to schedule service or repairs.

These topics provide a foundation towards the development of a structured training program; however there are many more areas that can be considered, depending on your specific operation. If you already have a current training / orientation program, conduct an evaluation to determine if there are any gaps that you need to address to make it more effective.



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