

Behind the Wheel at Work



NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety

Behind the Wheel at Work is a quarterly eNewsletter bringing you the latest news from the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety.

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Road Safety Leadership

What does it mean to be a leader for road safety? And, how do you foster a culture of leadership in the workplace? Read on to learn more about this trending topic. For more road safety topics, [access previous newsletters](#).

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NIOSH CMVS Tweets

The first action employers can take to protect drivers at work is to create a culture of motor vehicle safety. Lear... <https://t.co/WUaWgDDvtS>

Keys to Successful Leadership



The theme of this year's [UN Global Road Safety Week](#), observed May 6-12, 2019, is "Leadership for Road Safety." The UN sees leadership as flowing from the top down (where governments pass laws to make roads safer) and from the bottom up (where citizens tell governments what needs to be done based on their knowledge of local roads). In this issue, we'll apply these ideas to workplace motor vehicle safety.

Most people in fleet safety management roles would agree on 2 points that are essential to success of a company's motor vehicle safety program: commitment from top management and driver engagement. These ideas are based on best practice. They're also supported by research.

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- Management commitment
- Driver engagement
- Bottom line
- Resources

What does it mean for a company's top-level managers to commit to motor vehicle safety? It's not just a matter of sending an encouraging email to drivers and hoping that things will change. Commitment means:

- Affirming motor vehicle safety as a core company value
- Defining motor vehicle roles and expectations for all involved (executives, upper and middle managers, fleet safety professionals, first-line supervisors, and drivers), and holding them accountable
- Providing enough staff and resources to run the program
- "Walking the walk:" If executives use their phones while driving or don't use seat belts, drivers won't buy in to company policies that tell them to do something different

Research has shown that commitment to motor vehicle safety by top management is linked to:

- Safer driving-related behaviors as reported by drivers, including: fewer driving errors, fewer violations of traffic laws or company safety policies; and lower levels of distracted, impaired, and fatigued driving ([Wills et al. 2006](#))
- More positive perceptions of company safety culture among drivers ([Wills et al. 2005](#) , [Wills et al. 2006](#))
- Lower rates of worker injuries in motor vehicle crashes¹

¹Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, data not yet published.

Safety Tip



Before making a big change to a motor vehicle safety policy, such as banning all mobile phone use while vehicles are in operation, explain the safety benefits of the new policy and give drivers a chance to ask questions.

Leadership Q&A: Shell's Brian Sambirsky



Brian Sambirsky is the General Manager for Downstream Land Logistics Safety for Shell. In this capacity, he works with Shell staff and contractors to help create a safe driving environment.

You've worked in a number of roles at Shell. How has this range of experience shaped your views about what it means to be a leader? +

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to visit more than 40 countries, but it was an experience in one of the four countries where I lived that shaped my views the most. I spent some time in Port Harcourt, Nigeria working with the local team to identify their road safety issues. As an outsider, I needed to earn trust. It took a couple of weeks for the contractor drivers to understand that I was there for them – to work on their behalf. Once they understood my focus was on their well-being, they were quick to share their insights with me. This experience clearly demonstrated that thinking first about the interests of those you lead and listening with empathy can quickly help unlock success for others.

What are the special challenges you face as a road safety leader in a multinational corporation? +

Beyond the obvious need for local translations, it is necessary to understand the driving environment that your drivers experience around the globe. I currently live in Houston and have become quite acclimated to local driving conditions, which are radically different than Cairo, Port Harcourt, Bangalore, and Manila. It would be impractical for me to think that what works in Houston to reduce driving risk will work in all other locations. The principles of Leadership and Driver

Engagement apply, but their application requires local knowledge to ensure the solution is effective.

What advice can you offer to help other road safety professionals become more effective leaders and advocates within their organizations? +

I am a big advocate for in-vehicle monitoring systems as a learning tool. Too often, the data is used for punitive reasons instead of learning opportunities. For me, I want to learn about the fleet risk before the incident happens. I want to know why drivers are hard-braking, the most powerful driving leading indicator, and what the patterns are that lead to a sudden need to stop the vehicle. I've found that making contact with a driver within 24 hours of a hard-braking event to find out why it happened has led drivers to perceive me as empathetic, caring, and wanting to learn, not punish. At that point, I've not only gained the insight I desired, but I've also positively engaged my driver, built trust between the two of us, and left that driver knowing that I truly care about his or her safety.

NIOSH Toolkit for Law Enforcement Officers



Law enforcement leadership (e.g., chiefs, command staff, supervisors) can help drivers take ownership of their safety using the [Officer Road Code Toolkit](#). This NIOSH toolkit is designed to promote safe driving practices within an agency so that patrol officers operate by a unified code behind the wheel: *Drive to Arrive Alive*.

The toolkit covers 4 topics: seat belt use, speeding, distraction, and stress response. The toolkit also explains how agency leaders can incorporate the toolkit's 40 road safety messages into the workday. Leadership can show commitment to road safety by using multiple opportunities to engage with patrol officers, including roll call, dispatch, and through mobile data terminals or others electronic devices. Sharing the *Drive to Arrive Alive* decal with officers to stick on their vehicle door or dashboard reminds them of their personal commitment to road safety.

How can you show road safety leadership at your workplace, in your industry?

Road Safety Observances



Raise the profile of road safety in your organization. Managers and drivers can participate in these upcoming observances:

April is [Distracted Driving Awareness Month](#) and [National Work Zone Awareness Week](#).

May is [Safety + Health Week](#), [Global Road Safety Week](#), and [National Police Week](#).

June is [National Safety Month](#).

Follow [@NIOSH_MVSafety](#) for regular road safety tips and facts.

Road Safety Video



Kyla Retzer, Assistant Coordinator of the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety, shared components of a good road safety program (including leadership commitment) in a recent [video](#) from the 2019 International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC) Safety, Environment & Training Conference & Exhibition.



Questions? Comments? Email kur4@cdc.gov.



What motor vehicle safety topics do you want to read about? Tweet or email us to share your thoughts.

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