# Behind the Wheel at Work

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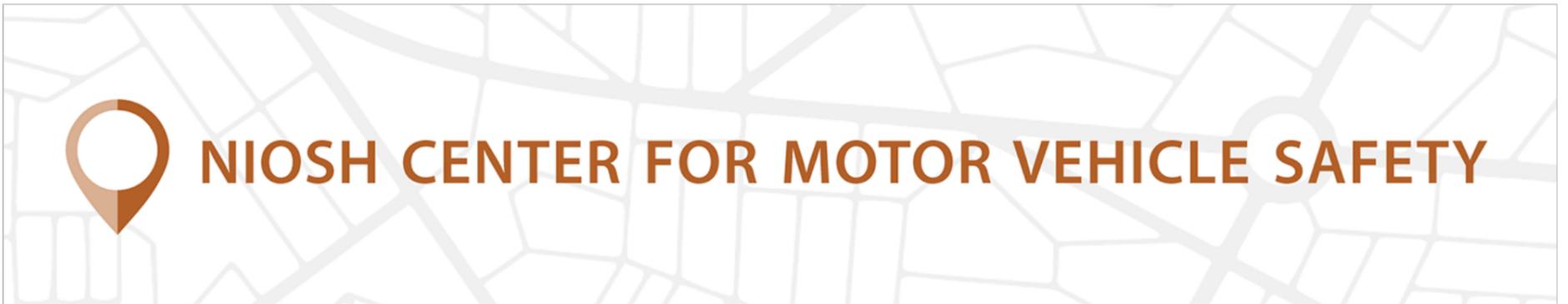
*Behind the Wheel at Work* is a quarterly eNewsletter bringing you the latest news from the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety.

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## Driver Training at Work

Why offer driving training? What kinds of training are required by law? How can effective coaching help employees make lasting improvements to their driving? Keep reading for answers to these questions and more.

### Update on the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Response

While the NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety will continue to share valuable safety information in our quarterly Behind the Wheel at Work eNewsletter, you can stay up to date on the COVID-19 response in real time on CDC's COVID-19 webpage or sign up for CDC's COVID-19 newsletter.

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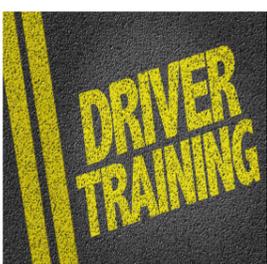
The Basics

Safety Tip

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## The Basics

Why offer driver training for employees who drive as part of their jobs?                                    −

1. To ensure that new employees have the basic skills, knowledge, and attitudes to operate vehicles safely and in accordance with your company's expectations
2. To give more experienced drivers a periodic "refresher" to maintain their skills and knowledge
3. To give high-risk drivers the opportunity to improve their skills, knowledge, and attitudes

You can offer driver training online, in the classroom, in a driving simulator, behind the wheel, or through a combination of methods. Best practice is to cover theory through classroom or online instruction followed by practical training, which is most effective if it's done behind the wheel.

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## When should you schedule driver training? −

Timing is important for training new employee drivers. Get drivers trained as soon as possible after they are hired. Prompt driver training equips your drivers with knowledge and skills that will keep them safer on the road. It also gives you the opportunity to introduce the policies they are expected to follow and shows them that motor vehicle safety is a priority for your company. Because safe driving is as much about attitudes as it is about vehicle operating skills, driver training provides an opportunity to reinforce your company's overall values about safety.

## What topics should basic driver training address? −

- **Safe driving skills:**
    - Keeping a safe following distance
    - Avoiding harsh acceleration and braking
    - Driving in inclement weather
    - Pulling forward into a parking space where possible
- **Hazard perception and situational awareness:**
    - Scanning the road and surrounding areas (ahead, behind, and next to you) for other vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists
    - Checking for braking or stopped vehicles and debris in the road
    - Deciding on and taking action to avoid a crash
- **The vehicle:**
    - Doing a 360-degree walk-around before entering the vehicle (e.g., to check tires and ensure there are no obstructions around the vehicle)
    - Keeping tires properly inflated
    - Adjusting seats and mirrors
    - Maintaining the vehicle according to manufacturer recommendations
    - Understanding how advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) operate
- **Risky driving:** Dangers of impaired, fatigued, and distracted driving; speeding; and not wearing a seat belt
- **For drivers of large trucks and buses:** Topics important to safe operation of these vehicles (e.g., securing cargo, pre-trip inspections)
- **Remedial training:** Addressing risky behaviors shown by individual drivers (e.g., remedial training for drivers who have been involved in rear-end crashes)

## What is known about the effectiveness of driver training for employee drivers? −

More research is needed to determine what kinds of driver training are currently being provided by employers and which types of training are the most effective. A recent study of 70 companies found that several driver training practices were significantly associated with lower rates of injury, including providing driver training in any form to all employees, training drivers who will be using personal vehicles, and identifying high-risk drivers and giving them remedial training. This study also identified many other motor vehicle safety practices that were linked to lower rates of crashes and injuries, showing that training is just one part of a comprehensive motor vehicle safety program.[1]

[1] Vivoda, J.M., Pratt, S.G., Gillies, S.J., 2019. The relationships among roadway safety management practices, collision rates, and injury rates within company fleets. Safety Science 120, 589-602.

## What kinds of driver training are required by law or regulation? −

- **For drivers of large trucks and buses:** For these vehicles, there are currently no federal regulations that require companies to give initial driver training to longer-term employees or refresher training to experienced drivers. In general, it is up to the driver to meet federal requirements to qualify as an operator and the employer to make sure that drivers have met these requirements.
    - To obtain the commercial driver's license (CDL) needed to operate large trucks and buses, drivers must pass their state's knowledge and skills test. Federal regulations specify in detail the topics that must be covered by these tests. New drivers can get the necessary knowledge and skills through commercial driver training institutes, vocational training programs, or military experience.
    - Under federal regulations now in force, CDL drivers with less than one year of experience in the industry are required to receive "entry-level driver training" ⧉ covering driver qualification, hours of service, health and wellness, and whistleblower protections. As of this writing, entry-level driver training requirements are set to expand in February 2022 ⧉ , essentially redefining entry-level driver training as the curriculum the trainee must be taught *before* taking the CDL test. In February 2022, CDL applicants should be able to access a new Training Provider Registry to identify training that would meet the new entry-level driver training requirements.
    - CDL drivers must show additional knowledge and skills if they want to obtain endorsements to operate more specialized vehicles ⧉ such as double and triple trailers, vehicles carrying hazardous materials, and school buses.
- **For drivers of emergency response vehicles:** States and localities usually require drivers of fire apparatus, ambulances, and police vehicles to receive intensive driver training before they begin work.
- **For drivers of light vehicles:** Workers who operate vehicles weighing 10,000 pounds or less are not required to have driver training related to their employment.

> ### Planning your driver training program                                    —

Developing an effective driver training program requires planning. Here are some things to consider before you engage a fleet service provider to train your employee drivers or assign your own employees to be trainers.

**Understand what your training program should emphasize:**

- Look at your company's crash and claims data to determine what types of incidents your drivers are involved in. If they make frequent stops, you may find that backing and parking incidents are your biggest problem. If most of your company travel is on congested urban streets, you may see that rear-end or intersection crashes dominate.
- Also look for evidence of risky driving behaviors such as using a cell phone, speeding, and not wearing a seat belt. You might find this information in your crash and claims data, in motor vehicle record checks, or in data from in-vehicle monitoring systems (IVMS).

**Use multiple approaches to tailor the training to your fleet and drivers:**

- Consult your fleet risk assessment or do a risk assessment if you don't yet have one. This will help identify the types of driving environments your drivers encounter and suggest topics that should be included in your training.
- Consider using driver risk assessments to identify gaps in knowledge and attitudes.
- Make sure that drivers are trained on the vehicles they will be expected to operate. They need to understand the operating limitations of the vehicle and how to handle that vehicle in emergency situations. Company vehicles may have advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), such as automatic emergency braking, that they don't have on their personal vehicles. Drivers need to understand what these systems can and cannot do.

## Making sure the program runs efficiently —

Driver training is a significant investment of time and resources. Before you start training, it's important to decide how the program will be managed. Here are some points to consider:

- Introduce the training program to drivers and supervisors, explaining why it is important, how training will be given, and how it will benefit them and the company.
- Driver training is a good time to introduce your company's motor vehicle safety policies to new employees or to inform longer-term employees about updated policies. Consider using the training setting to have drivers acknowledge that they understand these policies.
- Decide where training records will be maintained. Will they become part of the employee's personnel record, or will they be kept within the motor vehicle safety program? Whichever you choose, it makes sense to set up information systems so that all data for each driver are easily accessible.
    - This includes data on driver training, acknowledgement of motor vehicle safety policies, motor vehicle record checks, in-vehicle monitoring systems (IVMS) data, risk assessment results, vehicle assignments, and crash history.
- If you decide to offer remedial training based on criteria such as traffic violations, crash involvement, or risky driving behaviors, tell drivers in advance what those criteria are and how they will be applied.
- Re-assess your driver training program regularly to make sure the content and methods are up-to-date and that it addresses the issues your drivers are experiencing.

## Resources on driver training and risk assessment —

International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, 2020. Land transportation safety recommended practice (OGP 365) ⧉ , version 4.0 (August 2020). International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, Land Transportation Safety Subcommittee, London.

Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, 2015. NETS guide to defensive driver training ⧉ . Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, Vienna, VA.

ANSI/ASSE, 2017. ANSI/ASSE Z15.1-2017, Safe practices for motor vehicle operations. American National Standards Institute, New York.

**Bottom Line:** Driver training can help protect your employee drivers from crashes and injuries, but it is just one part of a comprehensive motor vehicle safety program.

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### Safety Tip

⚠️ Most safety experts recommend that in ideal weather conditions, you keep a minimum 3 seconds distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. At night and in bad weather, this distance needs to be increased to allow more time to slow down or stop.

# Q&A with Driving Dynamics' Tony Vinciguerra

*Tony Vinciguerra, COO of Driving Dynamics, has 30 years of experience serving customers in the fleet and safety industry. Learn more at www.drivingdynamics.com ⧉ .*

I think we agree that safe driving requires more than just having the skills to handle a vehicle. What else do employees need to understand about driving to avoid crashes and injuries?     +

What employees need to understand is themselves! Most drivers do not have an objective view of their abilities (or lack thereof) to competently operate a vehicle, nor do they recognize how their attitudes and behaviors put them at risk for a crash.

Assuming drivers have advanced skills and techniques to successfully operate a vehicle, they can then work on improving decision-making and overall behavior while driving. Having skills isn't enough to keep a driver safe if that driver decides to behave inappropriately behind the wheel. Complete focus on driving is required.

Drivers can change their mindset — think about the "safest" route rather than the "quickest" one. Making a conscious decision to drive in lower-risk situations, such as using an alternative route to avoid busy neighborhoods, can reduce exposure to higher-risk situations.

Once they understand how their behavior and attitude impacts their driving, most drivers are open to change and commit to becoming safer and more responsible behind the wheel.

**Some companies provide generic driver training online or in the classroom, while others also coach drivers on improving specific problems identified through in-vehicle monitoring systems or other sources. How can effective coaching help employees make lasting improvements to their driving?** +

In-vehicle monitoring systems can identify opportunities to improve drivers' performance, but these drivers are still at risk from the actions of others on the road. Unless defensive driving skills are regularly refreshed and validated, fleet drivers are still at risk from the "other guy."

Coaching is increasingly being recognized as the preferred approach to improving workers' driving performance. Coaching is based on asking and providing guidance rather than telling, provoking thought rather than giving directions, and holding a person accountable for his or her goals.

The theory behind coaching is to help the driver become more aware of driving decisions, draw objective conclusions about performance, take ownership of the outcome, and commit to making positive, long-term changes. Effective coaching requires more than a simple understanding of a driver's technical skills. It requires insights into how the driver's personality traits may affect their driving. The coach can use these insights to discuss and encourage "pattern interrupts" that will lead to better responses in risky situations. For example, a driver might acknowledge habitually driving in the left lane, thinking that if he were in the right lane following someone, he was driving too slowly. The coach would try to "interrupt" this behavior by reinforcing that the left lane should be used only to pass, not as a travel lane.

Coaching is a powerful tool that guides drivers to critically think about driving situations. It helps demonstrate concern for the driver's safety and allows the driver to reach their own conclusion that there is more they can do to be a safer driver.

**COVID-19 has disrupted companies' ability to offer high-quality driver training for new hires and experienced employee drivers. What strategies would you recommend to companies to help them navigate these challenges?** +

First, companies still need to reinforce the safety culture message. Although vehicle miles driven have decreased since the start of the pandemic, fatalities have increased.

Second, companies can continue to use online training but also investigate virtual instructor-led training, which is more engaging due to the student-teacher interaction. Some training providers have even adapted their behind-the-wheel training to meet CDC COVID-19 guidelines

providers have even adapted their behind-the-wheel training to meet CDC COVID-19 guidelines for safety. These companies have effectively incorporated radios to communicate, so drivers never have to leave their vehicle. Bottom line – some driver training is better than no driver training.

## New report from NETS – Cost of crashes in 2019

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) has just released an updated report on the cost of motor vehicle crashes to employers. In 2018, crashes on and off the job cost U.S. employers an estimated $72.2 billion – an average of $751,382 for each fatality, $75,176 for each nonfatal injury, and $5,483 for each crash resulting in property damage only.

The new report breaks down the cost of crashes associated with unsafe driving behaviors: not wearing a seat belt, alcohol use, distracted driving, and speeding. It also provides cost estimates by state and by industry. The report is accompanied by an infographic that summarizes data from the report, and an updated cost-of-crashes calculator that was developed in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). All these resources can help safety professionals calculate the costs of crashes in their own organizations and make the case for stronger company policies. They are available free of charge at UPDATED! Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers—2019 – Network of Employers for Traffic Safety ☐ .

## More Information

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