

THE PacificComp TRAINER

SAFETY ON THE ROAD AND BEYOND

Driving safety is a topic that usually deals with hazards while an employee is behind the wheel. Did you know that there are more hazards that drivers are exposed to and that these hazards are usually overlooked until there is a serious injury? Take the pro-active approach and uncover these hazards so that **preventative measures** can be implemented.

Your Drivers Safety Program should always start with training drivers prior to getting behind the wheel and at least annually after that. This training must include all employees that will be driving company vehicles as well as employees who are using personal vehicles for company use. Since winter weather often creates additional driving hazards, it is best to do your training at least a month prior to the change in weather. Here are a few good reminders:

- Always maintain 3 points of contact (2 hands - 1 foot or 2 feet - 1 hand) when entering or exiting tall vehicles to reduce the possibility of falling.
- Always buckle up
- Eliminate the use of cell phones and/or radios while driving
- Do not eat while behind the wheel
- Limit the use of the radio/CD/MP3 player while driving
- Plan route ahead of time and allow plenty of time to reach the destination
- Stay out of other vehicles' blind spots
- Maintain a safe distance from the car in front of you (remember the two-second rule, 3-seconds for large trucks), and increase the distance in bad weather and if you are carrying a heavy load
- Stay alert and avoid talking to passengers and looking at the scenery
- Know what to do if the vehicle breaks down or gets a flat tire.

Overlooked exposures occur when drivers arrive at their destinations, whether they are delivering or picking-up. These exposures can be as dangerous as those present on the road. Do not wait for an accident to happen to implement safety procedures. What hazards exist at your vendors' or customers' locations?

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At the next Driver's Training Session, talk about some of the conditions that you are exposed to when you enter the premises of your vendor or customer. Here are some items to talk about:

- Are drivers opening or closing gates, bay doors, trailer doors, etc.? Are these items properly maintained? Unstable? Struggle to open? Request that your vendor or customer open these items and always report problems and/or concerns to them
- Are employees helping load and/or unload? Are there procedures to ensure their safety if assisting? Is it necessary for them to assist? Do they maintain a safe distance from the loading/unloading process? Do they have the proper equipment to unload? Do your drivers have to operate customer forklifts or other equipment?
- Are there other unsafe conditions employees must contend with?
 - Fumes or dust?
 - Should your drivers wear Personal Protective Equipment?
 - Wet, slippery or uneven floors?
 - Are wheel chocks available?
 - Are docking plates available?
 - Forklift and traffic congestion?
 - Night work – security issues?

Remember, since you are ultimately responsible for any faulty equipment, the use of any faulty equipment should be discontinued.

The identification of hazards is the first step to preventing an accident and potential injury. Combined efforts between you and your vendor/customer to limit exposure to hazards comprise the next step. And the implementation of procedures to avoid or reduce the exposure to any revealed hazard is the third step.

Since monitoring employees that are on the road can be a challenging task, there is a certain trust that these individuals have to perform their job duties safely. Driving responsibilities are for employees who are responsible, mature, and qualified in order to ensure that preventative measures will be followed.