

ROAD SAFETY

HOW FLEET MANAGERS CAN COMBAT DISTRACTED DRIVING

FOR COMPANIES that manage fleets of vehicles, distracted driving is a risk that can pose an existential threat to the company.

Collisions resulting from inattentive driving can lead to serious injuries, costly vehicle damage and insurance rate hikes or cancellations. Most fleets are comprised of vehicles that are significantly larger than most passenger vehicles, and when they are in accidents, they can cause significant property damage and injuries, which translates into greater liability for your organization.

The scope and types of distractions

Fleet drivers face unique risks as they often spend long hours on the road, operate under tight schedules and interact with in-cab technology.

While mobile phone use is often the most cited culprit, distractions come in many forms and are typically categorized into three types:

Manual distractions – Activities that take a driver’s hands off the wheel, such as eating, adjusting controls or reaching for objects.

Visual distractions – Taking one’s eyes off the road, such as checking a GPS screen or looking at a phone.

Cognitive distractions – Anything that pulls mental focus away from driving, including fatigue, conversations or emotional stress.

and Bluetooth devices can reduce the need for physical interaction, but they don’t eliminate risk. Even hands-free calls can be distracting. Encourage drivers to keep communication brief and avoid making calls while driving.

Schedule wisely to reduce fatigue – Make sure schedules allow for adequate rest, limit overtime driving and rotate assignments when possible. Encourage drivers to take breaks and report fatigue honestly.

Incentivize safe behavior – Recognize and reward drivers who demonstrate safe, distraction-free driving habits. Incentive programs can reinforce good behavior and build a safety culture.

Measure success – Look at metrics such as the frequency of risky events flagged by telematics, crash rates and insurance claims. Use that data to make adjustments, whether it’s tweaking driver schedules, updating training materials or revisiting enforcement practices.

Insurance and liability risks

A single distracted driving incident can carry far-reaching implications:

- Higher premiums after claims are filed.
- Increased scrutiny or loss of coverage from insurers.
- Legal liability, including lawsuits and settlements.
- Downtime and repair costs for vehicles.

What fleet managers can do

To reduce the risk of distraction-related incidents, fleet operators should implement a layered approach that combines technology, training and culture. Here are some key strategies:

Establish and enforce a distracted driving policy – Every fleet should have a clear, written policy that prohibits manual phone use and limits other in-cab distractions. Detail acceptable behaviors, consequences for violations and the procedures for reporting incidents.

Educate drivers regularly – Schedule regular safety refreshers, include real-world case studies and highlight new technology or trends contributing to distraction. Emphasize the consequences of distracted driving, both personally and professionally.

Invest in telematics and monitoring – Telematics systems allow fleet managers to monitor driver behavior by flagging actions such as hard braking, erratic lane changes or extended screen time. Some systems offer in-cab alerts to help drivers self-correct in real time.

Use hands-free tools wisely – Voice-activated controls



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