Reporting and recording crash data:
an information sheet for fleet managers

Even if your company has not been involved in a serious crash in recent years, most companies who regularly use roads experience bumps, scrapes and near misses. This information sheet explains why it is important to report and record all incidents, including any minor ones. It outlines the procedures managers can introduce for drivers to report incidents, ways of recording the data and also ways of analysing the information to ensure any patterns are noticed and risks on the road reduced.

Extent of the problem

Crashes involving company vehicles in the UK are a problem that needs to be tackled by managers through improved procedures and practices.

It is worrying that many companies still do not record crash data centrally at all and that often, the amount of information that drivers are required to report to their employers about an incident is limited. Most companies need to collect information about road crashes to support insurance claims, but far fewer use this information to manage their road risk.
Reporting and recording the extent and causes of incidents helps companies to improve the safety of their drivers and reduce financial costs by making informed decisions about the most effective measures to implement to manage risk. This is vital considering the level of risk involved in work-related driving. Research shows that:

- Company car drivers have about 50% more crashes than ordinary drivers, even after allowing for their higher mileage.
- Approximately a third of road fatalities in Britain are from crashes involving someone who was driving for work – this may account for over 20 fatalities and 250 serious injuries every week.
- Driving 25,000 miles per annum for work may produce a greater annual risk of death than coal mining or construction.
- The largest commercial vehicles are involved in a high proportion of deaths. The fatality rate among crashes involving trucks is more than one and a half times as high as among crashes involving cars or all motor vehicles on average.

It is important for managers to remember that acting on minor incidents can help prevent future major incidents. No matter how irrelevant a scrape or bump might seem, it could be an indication that a driver needs refresher training in certain skills or that a particular route a driver takes regularly is unsuitable. In a similar way, data from drivers on near-misses, if recorded and analysed effectively, could help prevent crashes.

Acting on minor incidents and near misses can also help reduce the cost of future incidents – small scrapes and wrecked bumpers may seem minor, but the repair bills will soon add up if these incidents happen regularly.

Communication

It is important that drivers understand why you are analysing the crash data and that the information you are giving them can help them prevent future crashes. A driver might not realise it but if they are repeatedly involved in reversing incidents, then they may find themselves reversing into and killing someone unless the problem is addressed.

It is important to ensure that drivers are aware of the procedures for reporting incidents. An effective way to communicate with drivers is through a combination of methods – which may include through induction, training and a driver handbook. Using a variety of methods such as these will ensure that the importance of reporting incidents is reinforced to your drivers.

Driver handbooks

A driver handbook for your drivers is a first step towards driver safety. As well as explaining your company’s policies and rules on driving, and advice on how to drive safely, it should also be used to provide guidance in the event of an incident. It should include:

- Advice on what to do in the event of an incident
- Blank ‘bump cards’ (more about this is in the Reporting and Recording section)
- Contact details for the relevant person in the company to whom incidents should be reported
- Any additional emergency contacts, such as your recovery company

Advice for possible inclusion in your driver handbook

In the event of an incident:

By law any driver involved in a crash must always STOP. Failure to stop after an incident or failure to report an incident carries a maximum penalty of:

- 6 months imprisonment;
- a £5,000 fine;
- possible disqualification;
- 5-10 penalty points.

Drivers must also:

- Remain calm, even if provoked by other parties. Do not argue or show aggression.
- Call the emergency services if anyone is injured or there is serious damage to vehicles or property. If the police attend the scene, note the reporting officer’s name, number and station.
- Third parties are obliged under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to give their name, address, and registration number and to give insurance details under section 154. For full laws on producing documentation at the scene of a crash, please refer to Rules 260 – 261 of the Highway Code, at www.highwaycode.gov.uk.
- Use a bump card to record information about the crash, exchange details with third parties and take the name and address of witnesses.
- If a camera is available, photograph the scene from different angles. Include vehicles in their impact position, damage to their own and third party vehicles/property, skid marks and signposts.
- Contact their depot supervisor and/or the insurance department as soon as it is practical to do so.
Having an open and friendly attitude towards communication within your company will encourage drivers to feel comfortable and confident in reporting incidents.

Presentations may prove to be an effective way of educating drivers, when combined with written resources. Having the message delivered in a face-to-face way will help to ensure that the message sinks in. Presentations also provide the opportunity for drivers to ask questions on anything they are unsure about. This should help ensure that all drivers will be clear on exactly what is expected from them in the event of a crash, and can not claim that they were unsure of the correct procedures.

The most important message to get across to drivers is that it is essential to record all incidents – make sure they are aware that their future safety can depend on them reporting any minor bumps and scrapes.

Employees must be actively encouraged to report all incidents. Some ways of encouraging better reporting are:

1. Stress the value of reporting incidents to others, as reporting can help prevent problems for workmates
2. Disciplinary action against anyone who fails to report an incident and encouragement for those who do report
3. Use statistics positively – for example show the ratio of major to minor incidents which improves with better reporting, or show the average cost per incident which goes down if more minor incidents are reported
4. Make reporting forms easy to complete and show drivers that the system is working and improving
5. Raise awareness through team briefings, posters, newsletters and prizes for quality reporting.

You should regularly review your incident reporting and recording procedures. Through experience, you may find that you need to obtain more information to analyse your incidents sufficiently, and in turn try to prevent future crashes, bumps and scrapes.

**Reporting and recording methods**

Companies report and record their crash information in different ways. Sometimes even divisions of the same company report and record information differently. This may mean it is difficult to compare the information and spot trends and patterns. It will also mean it is difficult to evaluate the success of any risk management procedures that have been put into place.

Poor or incomplete data can also make it harder to defend insurance and personal injury claims, which can be costly to companies. As well as being expensive such claims can also have a negative effect on your company’s reputation.

**CASE STUDY**

**SUCKLING TRANSPORT**

Suckling Transport runs a fleet of about 110 vehicles, mainly tankers for delivering petrol to forecourts and service stations. The company covers approximately 11 million vehicle miles a year. In 2001, the company was prompted by rising insurance costs to improve road safety among its fleet.

Suckling has used Company Vehicle Incident Reporting and Recording (CoVIR) research by the University of Huddersfield and Brake* to develop its crash recording and reporting procedures, including:

- bump cards for drivers to record collision information;
- report cards for near misses, to help avoid future potential incidents;
- disposable cameras to record pictures of collisions;
- a detailed database for monitoring analysing and collision data.

Crash reporting data showed that the most commonly recorded location of crashes among Suckling drivers was at petrol stations during fuel delivery, often due to poor design of access routes. Suckling used this information to make risk assessments of the sites and develop site plans to analyse hazards and accessibility.

The disposable cameras enable drivers to record any incidents they are involved with accurately. In one case, the camera enabled a company driver to prove he was not blameworthy for a crash, by recording the fact that the other driver’s car had ‘steamed up’ windows that impaired their view.

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* The CoVIR project, undertaken by the University of Huddersfield with support from Brake is a comprehensive review of crash reporting and recording. It contains best practice guidance and templates and is freely available from the Department for Transport website www.dft.gov.uk or by emailing www.drwillmurray.com/covir.html.
**Bump cards**

Drivers should fill in a ‘bump card’ for all incidents, ensuring they provide as many details as possible. Blank bump cards should be kept in all company vehicles at all times – for example, inside the driver handbook.

Bump cards should require the driver to fill in details including:

- **Crash details** – date, time, location, road condition, speed limit of road
- **Police details** – whether police are in attendance, name of officer, name of station, telephone number
- **Damage to other vehicle/property** – vehicle type, make/model, registration number, driver name, address, telephone number, third party insurer, policy number, description of damage
- **Witnesses** – name, address
- **Brief description of what happened**
- **Sketch**
- **Detachable form** – this should include date, time, location, company driver name, registration number, depot, telephone number. *This part of the bump card should be detached and given to the other party.*

**Interview**

The responsible manager should interview drivers within 24 hours of any incident. Together the manager and driver should complete a report form about the incident, including the causes if known. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents recommends that managers investigate crashes or near misses, in order to:

- Establish how and why the incident occurred
- Identify the corrective measures needed to prevent a similar incident
- Be part of an overall corporate risk management package to minimise financial loss
- Help assess liability issues for legal and insurance purposes

The manager should also decide whether the driver was at fault using the information they provide, which may suggest the driver should be re-assessed, receive further training or ultimately be taken off driving duties depending on the circumstances.

A blameworthy incident could include the following:

- Driving too fast for the circumstances
- Applying brakes too fiercely. With certain exceptions (such as unseen oil), skids are blameworthy.
- Failing to anticipate possible difficulties and danger
- Failing to give proper and adequate signals of intentions
- Failing to comply with the Highway Code

**Data recording**

For every incident, all information should be recorded on a computer, using a database programme with ‘coded’ columns for different types of crash information (including time of day, type of vehicle, name of driver, location of the incident, causes of the incident). This will enable managers to analyse the information about all incidents over a period of time and identify trends.

**CASE STUDY**

**BRITISH GAS**

British Gas operates more than 9,500 vehicles, mostly a mixture of small and large vans. British Gas engineers use the vans to travel between homes, on average visiting between 10 and 16 homes each day. In 2004, the company decided that it needed to manage its crash data better in order to improve its employees’ safety on the roads.

British Gas employees involved in a crash must report the incident through an external company, AA Accident Management. This company produces reports on a monthly basis, which details the incident in terms of date, time, location, fault, length of time it took to report, cost and incident description. The data is sent to the British Gas Fleet Compliance Manager, Jon York. He analyses and sorts it into specific categories, such as:

- Vehicle reversing;
- Collided with pedestrian;
- Struck vehicle travelling in opposite direction;
- Vehicle left road;
- Hit stationary object.

Data is analysed over a period of 18 months to identify any emerging trends. Staff who use their own vehicles to drive on company business are encouraged to inform their line manager of any incidents at work. Drivers must undertake an assessment on recruitment and driving history details for each driver are considered to decide if training is needed. Training feedback is also recorded to compare with future incident records. Any serious vehicle collisions are thoroughly investigated. British Gas has also joined a benchmarking group, which enables operators to compare crash data.

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Analysing crash data

Analysing data and spotting trends can help managers to prevent future incidents. For example crash data might show that one driver is involved in more incidents than other drivers. In this case, after investigation and assessment, a manager might need to provide extra training to the driver and if their driving does not improve, remove them from driving duties.

Crash data could also indicate that more incidents happen on a particular stretch of road. In this case a manager should try to devise an alternative route or identify why this particular stretch of road is dangerous and ensure drivers are aware of the particular hazards and trained in how to avoid them, and report any problems to the local council’s highway engineer.

Some examples of trends and what action could be taken:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incidents at the same time of day</td>
<td>Consider whether this may indicate that drivers are tired – such as during the natural afternoon ‘dip’ between 2 – 4pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumps/ scrapes in the depot</td>
<td>Consider whether there is enough room for vehicles to manoeuvre safely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A high number of reversing incidents</td>
<td>Consider whether drivers need more training on reversing safely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents involving same driver</td>
<td>Discuss the problem with the driver and determine whether they seem to be stressed/ having problems at home – such as a death in the family, a new baby or are moving home. Consider whether they need further training or removal (temporary or permanent) from driving duties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any trends that are identified should be publicised and explained to other managers and staff. Road risk initiatives should be put into place to tackle the highlighted trends. Your company’s insurance broker should also be involved, as they may be able to offer useful suggestions.

As with any communication, presentations may be a useful way of getting the information across to your drivers. Charts and graphs can be helpful to show the trends that have been identified from the crash data. Table A shows how data on the type of vehicle insurance claims being made within a company can be presented. This makes it easy to see the type of incidents that lead most to claims being made, and which are costing the most. For example, it can be seen that while just 3.6% of claims made are because of rear crashes where a company driver has hit another driver, these types of crashes account for 14.4% of vehicle insurance costs, so this might be an area in which a company would want to focus on improving crash records.

**Table A – claims data: incident type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim type</th>
<th>% of claim</th>
<th>% of costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Client hit TP in rear</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit fixed/temporary object</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP [unknown] hit Client whilst parked</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP hit Client in rear</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break-in/Theft</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle returned damaged by user</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulling out: Client into path of TP</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulling out: TP into path of Client</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversing: Client reversed into TP</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client hit parked/stationery TP vehicle</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TP (known) hit Client whilst parked</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plotting the percentage of drivers involved in the percentage of crashes within a company (such as in table B) makes it easy to see which drivers are responsible for a higher proportion of crashes than others. In table B, it can be seen that 10% of drivers are responsible for 25% of the crashes. Discovering a pattern like this from crash data would suggest to a company that something needs to be done to improve crash records among this 10%.

**Table B – Reactive driver risk assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of drivers</th>
<th>% of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Black box technology

It is possible to record a range of information about a journey or incident by installing ‘black box’ technology into your fleet of vehicles. There are two types of black box technology:

**Journey data recorders** – these are fitted to vehicles to record information about how the vehicle is driven. They work by reading data from the tachograph (if fitted), speedometer, rev counter, fuel flow meter and brakes. The information can be downloaded to a computer for analysis. The data can highlight drivers who are not driving economically or safely and appropriate action can be taken. Some journey data recorders include warning lights fitted to the vehicle dashboard to alert the driver if they are driving dangerously or uneconomically.

**Incident data recorders** – these record information such as acceleration, braking and movement of a vehicle before and during a crash. The information gathered can then be used to investigate the incident and action can be taken to prevent similar incidents occurring. The IDR can also monitor when a vehicle is parked and recognise a collision in the event of the vehicle being struck while stationary – it will then record the time, date and what direction the impact came from.

Sources of further information

Please refer to the Fleet Safety Forum Directory (a free product available from Brake on 01484 559909) for contact details of crash data analysis software suppliers, black box technology companies, and a range of other companies and organisations offering advice and services to help companies report and record crash data effectively.

Free training on delivering effective road safety presentations to drivers

Brake’s Fleet Safety Forum offers free training for fleet managers and health and safety officers to enable them to deliver awareness-raising presentations to company drivers. This is based on its *Pledge to Drive Safely*, a 12-point plan for safe driving. The training is provided through the FedEx & Brake Road Safety Academy, an initiative by Brake and funded by express delivery company FedEx. All attendees receive a PowerPoint presentation on disc to deliver to groups of drivers, either as a reminder to drivers of key safe driving principles, or as part of an induction programme, plus free leaflets and other background resources. The training is designed to help managers deliver awareness-based education that will compliment any skills-based training they provide. To register for training in your area, contact the Fleet Safety Forum on 01484 559909 or fleetsafetyforum@brake.org.uk.

For information on other organisations offering training and advice, see ‘Sources of Further Information.’

About The Fleet Safety Forum

Subscribers to the Fleet Safety Forum receive monthly ‘road risk management’ mailings with up-to-date information, research and resources on a variety of fleet safety topics. Mailings include a newsletter, information sheets, posters, leaflets, guides and discounted invitations to conferences and workshops.

Subscription costs are low, and start from around £105 (+VAT) per year.

T: Adam Casper on 01484 559920 or 01484 559909
E: fleetsafetyforum@brake.org.uk

End Notes

1. The Accident Liability of Company Car Drivers (TRL 317), TRL, www.trl.co.uk
2. Driving at Work, Managing work-related road safety, HSE, www.hse.gov.uk
7. Company Vehicle Incident Reporting and Recording (CoVIR), www.dft.gov.uk
8. Croner, in Company Vehicle Incident Reporting and Recording (CoVIR), www.dft.gov.uk
9. Company Vehicle Incident Reporting and Recording (CoVIR), www.dft.gov.uk

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