

Driver Hiring and Selection – Auto Liability

It's No Accident

Millions of workers drive or ride in a motor vehicle every day as part of their jobs. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related deaths in the U.S. The type of company or job performed doesn't matter, the risk is present. A large majority of crashes are due to human error. Distracted driving remains one of the leading causes of vehicle accidents in the U.S. These types of events bring horrific pain and suffering to family, friends, and colleagues.

Preventing work-related vehicle incidents pose what is probably the largest challenge you will face as a business owner. The road is a unique work environment and your ability to control working conditions and exert direct supervisory controls over your employees is extremely limited.

Employees from time to time feel pressured to drive faster and for longer periods to complete their routes or daily job duties. Traffic volumes and road construction continue to increase year after year and technologies such as cellular phones, dispatch equipment, GPS and infotainment systems can lead to individuals failing to pay attention when driving transport vehicles, delivery vans, service trucks and more.

With those considerations in mind, you would think it would be obvious that the process to control your company's auto risk and prevent traumatic events related to your business auto operations should

begin with the application process. **Unfortunately, too many companies fall into poor company hiring and screening policies through inattentive or non-existent planning and general bad practice.**

The typical company would say that they have stringent hiring guidelines and many others may say they "do a good job of selecting the right drivers." Do you really do a good job? What are your hiring guidelines? What requirements does a driver have to meet in order to receive an interview with your company? Are your guidelines written down? Are you checking the applicant's MVR (Motor Vehicle Record)? Are they followed step by step for every hire in your fleet? Are you informing your insurance agent of the new driver?

Unfortunately, industry data shows that most companies do not have a formalized procedure for hiring. As a broad overview, most companies have informal, non-documented hiring procedures outside of a basic application for employment. Most companies generally know what they would like to have in a driver but will often surrender those guidelines when faced with a driver shortage. When a good company gains a new contract, which requires them to add two or three drivers or have a driver or two leave their company, those guidelines are pushed aside in favor of expediency or money. A cautious approach is best, and statistics tell us that when you add improperly screened, under qualified and poor performing drivers to fleets, your costs typically go up as well.

Additional costs are often seen in your insurance bill through higher premiums as a result of accidents and claims. These increases can follow your company and affect your premiums for up to five years after the incident, while also increasing your maintenance budget from the repair of minor damages and increased wear and tear on the vehicle due to poor driving habits.

The stories of accidents involving unlicensed drivers, drivers with extremely poor records and criminal violations such as DUI and DWI are sensationalized on television and in other media throughout the country every day. The legal and civil ramifications that result from hiring these individuals is far greater than anything you could ever want to imagine. Sometimes no driver is truly better than a poor driver!

In order to prevent a bad hire from adversely affecting your company, you must do several things. The most important is to institute a company hiring policy for all employees who will drive on company business. This includes all drivers who drive a vehicle with a CDL (Commercial Driver License), a salesperson, those who drive service trucks and even a mailroom worker or gopher. The company policy must be firm for the hiring of all new drivers, and it should lay out exactly what steps are to be followed in the hiring process and exactly what qualifies and disqualifies an applicant. It should be completed and documented formally for every single person that is hired.

Items to Consider Including in your Hiring Guidelines:

- Minimum of two years verifiable driving experience in “like vehicles” (if you are hiring a liquid transport driver then a box truck driver should not be your first choice)
- Current CDL with proper endorsements for the prior two-year period
- Ability to pass a road test in the type of vehicle the applicant will be driving with another licensed CDL driver observing from the passenger seat
- Minimum of 3 years of verified work experience with references checked and 10 years of documented job history
- Prior employer check on previous drug and alcohol history for the preceding three years, including alcohol .04 or greater, positive controlled substance tests, refusals to test, etc
- Prior employer accident information for the preceding three years
- Set a preferred age category (recommend 25 to 70) and check with U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for proper guidelines and wording
- Implement a skills/physical test to ensure the applicant can do the entire job
- Require proof of medical qualification before hiring (especially important for older drivers and those with a prior medical history)
- Passing of pre-hire substance screening
- Complete a Motor Vehicle Report for the applicant covering the prior 36 months of driving history
- No major violations such as DUI, DWI, hit & run, vehicular manslaughter, or use of a vehicle in commission of a felony
- No reckless driving violations
- No more than three moving violations in the previous 36 months or more than two in the previous 24 months
- No more than one at fault accident during the previous 36 months
- No more than one at fault accident and one moving violation in the previous 36 months

- No violation resulting in the suspension or revocation of the license in the previous 24 months
- No violation for operating a vehicle on a suspended license

This is certainly not an all-encompassing list and can be modified to meet your individual company guidelines.

The fleet of vehicles on the roadway is unquestionably one of your largest exposures to risk and it should be treated in a considerate manner. Each time you hire a new driver and put them in one of your vehicles you are making them the face of your organization. How they drive and conduct themselves with your name on the side of the vehicle will set how the public perceives you as a company.



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