

ARA Risk Management

Employees



Please route to the following:

Accidents happen: Do you know why?

While a rental company's semi was heading down a canyon, the brakes failed. Thinking fast, the driver decided to turn the vehicle into the side of the mountain to avoid running into vehicles up ahead. Although damage did occur to the semi and other vehicles, no serious injuries resulted from the incident.

Did the driver react properly? Was there anything more he could have done to prevent the accident? Had the company maintained the vehicle properly? An accident investigation can help answer these types of questions.

Investigating driving incidents provides a number of benefits to companies. It can help weed out unsafe drivers: It can show what areas a company needs to address further in driver training. It can even prevent the same type of accident from recurring by providing insight into how to remedy accident causes.

Capital Rentals in the Washington, D.C., area, investigates every accident. "Our corporate safety committee performs the final analysis of each accident to determine preventability and those kinds of issues," says Mark Muller, the company's operations manager.

"Our policy is if a driver has more than one preventable accident in a three-year period, then on a second preventable accident, he needs to come before the corporate safety committee at their regular monthly meeting and explain what happened. The corporate safety committee has the option of giving him one more chance or taking him off the road. We've had to do that a couple of times."

To aid in an investigation, each vehicle at Diamond Rental, based in Salt Lake City, contains an accident investigation packet designed to walk

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drivers through the process of gathering pertinent information. The packet, which includes a camera to take pictures and a pen for filling out the paperwork, prompts drivers to assess the damage to the vehicle or cargo, road conditions,

weather conditions and any other involved vehicles. After completing the packet, drivers must return it to the company within 24 hours of the accident. Drivers also must take a drug test within eight hours of the accident.

Todd Darby, Diamond Rental's compliance manager, then investigates the accident further by talking to the driver or store manager to find out the cause to prevent it from recurring. Darby says that after going over the accidents, he determines which kind occur most frequently and then creates a training program for that area.

Vehicle incident investigations by companies can include interviews of drivers and witnesses, review of police reports and alcohol/drug testing results, vehicle inspection for defects and information on road and weather conditions at the time of the incident. After the investigation, a company should review the findings to determine whether the accident was preventable and what, if any, corrective actions to take. By using the gathered information wisely, companies can reduce the number of future incidents and their associated costs. ♦



Where You Belong

This publication is a member service of the American Rental Association (ARA) and ARA Insurance Services. Questions and comments may be sent to Carla Brozick, ARA director of education and training, at carla.brozick@ararental.org. You also may call her at 800/334-2177, ext. 241.

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Safe driving matters to everyone at your operation

Whether your operation is focused on construction, general tool, and/or party and event, you employ drivers who make deliveries. That means you need to be concerned about safe driving habits. Not only is this imperative for your employees, but it also is important for your customers and your business overall. Unsafe driving practices result in accidents, increased insurance costs and possible injury to your employees or others. Because this topic is of such vital importance to every rental operation, this issue addresses how you can enhance the safe driving program at your business. Discover what other operations are doing and learn tips that you can share at one of your safety meetings. ♦

Truck rodeo rounds out driving program at Capital Rentals

Capital Rentals in the Washington, D.C., area, began putting more emphasis on driving safety a few years ago after the number of preventable vehicle incidents increased.

“The single most effective thing we did was to become very intolerant of preventable accidents,” says Mark Muller, the company’s operations manager. “That not only got rid of a couple of bad apples, but it sent a message to the rest of the people.”

One important change that Capital Rentals made was to require new drivers, whether they have a commercial driver’s license (CDL) or not, to ride with an experienced driver for a one-week period. At the end of this training period, a designated senior driver gives the new driver a road test using the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) format for a driver check ride.

Other aspects of the company’s driver safety program include providing information from the fleet safety manual to drivers, holding safety meetings on safe driving topics, conducting accident

investigations and using global positioning systems (GPS) to monitor drivers.

So far, the program has yielded some impressive results. For the entire year of 2006, Capital Rentals experienced 22 vehicle accidents, and 19 of them were preventable. In 2007, the number of accidents was cut in half to 11, and four were preventable.

Capital Rentals took its driver safety program a step further by conducting a truck rodeo in March 2007. All of the drivers drove their trucks to a road course set up at a complex reserved by the company at the county fairgrounds. The event began by having all of the trucks line up by class of rollback trucks, service body (intermediate) trucks or pickup trucks. Safety committee members then inspected each truck to make sure it had proper documentation, a fire extinguisher, a first-aid kit and so forth.

“With preparation, every truck in our company was equipped with everything we had on the list,” Muller says.

The company also gave awards for the best-looking trucks in each class. “The week before the event, the guys were out there shining stuff up – cleaning the motors and the interior,” Muller says.

After the “show and shine,” drivers were tested on their skill, not speed. The test included zigzags around cones, backing up to a simulated loading dock, hitching up to an air compressor and backing into a tight space. Drivers in each class who scored the least number of faults won awards



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Capital Rentals
Operations Manager



presented at a barbecue following the contest.

Why did Capital Rentals choose to do a truck rodeo? “We wanted to improve our safety record,” Muller says. “We felt that this was part of the entire picture. We put the training materials out there. We discussed them with the people. We did ride-alongs, and we felt this was a nice way to round out the whole thing.”

Due to the success of the event, Capital Rentals plans to repeat the rodeo in the future. The company also learned from the rodeo that one model of its pickup trucks turns a little better than another model. Capital Rentals will want to keep that tidbit in mind the next time it purchases vehicles. ♦