

How Telematics Can Help HR

Action stations:

Road risk management in the spotlight

Managing the occupational health and safety risks facing employees on the road can be a challenging task. Many business drivers work alone and, away from their office premises, have to contend with a multitude of traffic dangers and other risk factors that are not easily controlled.

What's more, it appears confidence in their skills and experience behind the wheel is lulling many into a false sense of security. A recent survey by road safety charity Brake discovered people driving for business purposes are more likely to take dangerous risks than general motorists.

More than half of at-work drivers (54 per cent) admit speeding on 60mph limit roads, for example, compared with 34 per cent of non-work drivers. Close on a third (31 per cent) text while driving compared to 28 per cent of non-work drivers and almost one in six (17 per cent) admit grooming while driving, compared with 14 per cent of non-work drivers.

Hazardous Behaviour

The results of such hazardous behaviour are inevitable – figures released last year by the Department for Transport (DfT) showed deaths and serious injuries on UK roads had risen for the first time since 1994. Factors such as speed and the increased use of smartphones while driving are believed to be major reasons. Furthermore, the DfT estimates there are currently three million company cars on the roads and roughly one in three will be involved in an accident each year.

These statistics paint a worrying picture that will surely set alarm bells ringing among HR managers. Employers, after all, have the same duty of care obligations for their mobile workers as for all their office site staff. The Health and Safety at Work Act requires them to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health and safety of all employees while at work.

Corporate Manslaughter

Moreover, the legal implications of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act meanwhile should provide all the motivation needed to ensure adequate road risk management systems are in place.

The consequences of not implementing a road risk reduction programme can be severe. Courts can impose unlimited fines for Corporate Manslaughter convictions and the damage to a company's reputation could have even graver implications. In addition to corporate exposure individual criminal charges, including manslaughter, can be brought against directors or 'thinking minds' of an organisation.

The business cost of road traffic accidents involving at-work drivers can be considerable. TomTom Business Solutions Director UK & Ireland, Giles Margerison, considers how HR practitioners can best manage the risks and meet their legal obligations.



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The Health and Safety Executive's advice is clear – companies and their HR departments should ensure work-related road safety is integrated into wider arrangements for managing health and safety at work. To ensure risks are effectively managed they must address their health and safety "policy, responsibility, organisation, systems and monitoring".

Simply ensuring company vehicles have a valid MOT certificate, and that drivers hold a valid licence, is not enough to ensure their safety.

Beyond the introduction of a company-wide health and safety policy, organisations must strive to achieve a cultural shift among their employees to make sure policies are adhered to.

Technology can help

Technology can play a vital role in this process. Once safety guidelines, KPIs and performance benchmarks have been established, a fleet management system can help to enforce behavioural changes and significantly modify driver attitudes.

The early guises of tracking systems have evolved from basic track and trace to advanced management tools that integrate messaging, job dispatch, navigation and driver behaviour monitoring technologies.

On a basic level, such technology can be used to monitor speed, allowing managers to identify which of their employees are taking unnecessary risks by driving too fast. This however is just the tip of the iceberg, with today's more sophisticated systems offering extensive duty of care features.

Innovations such as TomTom's very own driver performance tools, for example, allow managers to monitor the behaviour of their mobile workers – providing a full statistical breakdown on factors such as speed, fuel consumption and even harsh steering or braking.

This allows for accurate profiles to be created for every driver, providing managers with a better idea where their strengths and weaknesses lie and allowing training to be better tailored to suit their individual requirements.

The opportunity to measure driver performance in a sustainable manner following training sessions also becomes a reality, protecting the business investment in meeting duty of care obligations.

Management reports can be automatically generated and notifications can even be triggered to remind managers when vehicles need to be serviced.

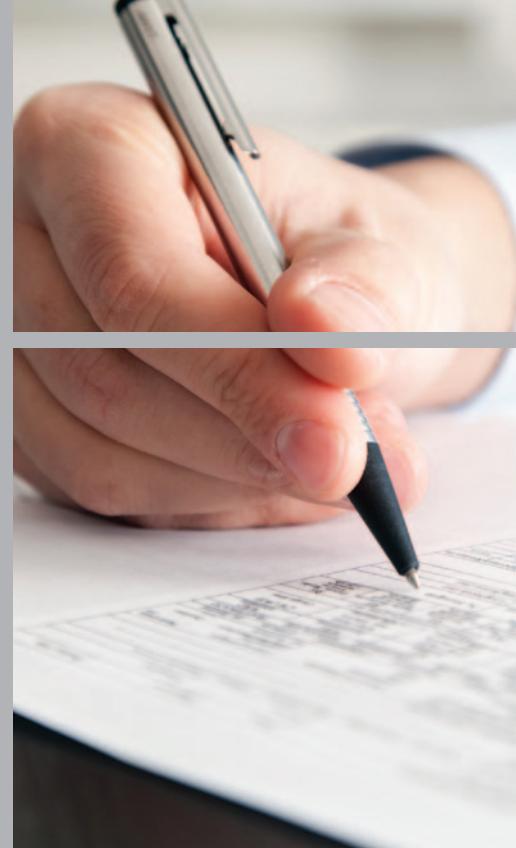
Resistance from staff

There will always be a risk of resistance from staff with any scheme involving such in-depth performance analysis but this can be overcome if it is positioned correctly and implemented with employee involvement.

Consultations with staff throughout the process is recommended, maintaining open lines of communication and offering incentives for improvements in performance. Employees should be reminded that any initiatives are designed with workplace safety front of mind.

The wealth of data provided by fleet management technology provides a watertight audit trail, which enables businesses to demonstrate their commitment to improved safety. By establishing a reduced risk profile, over a two year period cleaning specialist Zenith Hygiene Group Zenith even managed to slash £78,000 from its insurance premiums.

A commitment to safety is a commitment to good business practice and reputation management. Those who lead the charge will be better equipped to face the future with peace of mind and on a sound legal and operational footing.



Contact:
020 7255 9774
business.uk@tomtom.com

