

## Case Study Six

# British Telecommunications, Limited

### COMPANY OVERVIEW

BT is a large-scale multinational company, formerly a government organisation, and subsequently privatised in the early 1990s. The overall nature of business is telecommunications, including exchanges, commercial and residential phone fitting, and satellite technology. BT is currently undergoing further division into functional groups.

### NATURE OF OPERATION AND DRIVING ACTIVITIES

In the UK, there are approximately 55,000 cars in the BT fleet, including 40,000 commercial vehicles and 15,000 cars, including:

- 40,000 Transit vans
- Ford Fiestas, Escorts, articulated lorries, 'cherry pickers'
- Company cars
- Hire car agreement with major rental company
- Private car use for business purposes

It is estimated that an engineer could drive anywhere between 10 to 600 miles in a day depending on the nature of work, but probably average about 50 miles a day.

### ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Up until 6 months ago, there was a central BT group in charge of policy/strategy, however the role of this group is changing. Now, central health and safety issues are the responsibility of E-peopleserve, an independent contractor comprising of professional safety consultants, many of whom formerly worked for BT. BT is the predominant client for this group of 39 consultants, currently on a 5-year contract.

There is still a Central Group Safety Advisor, however the management of health and safety issues, including work-related road safety, is moving towards each line of business. These lines of business conduct Safety Forum meetings where agendas include aspects of road safety such as driving traits, vehicle use, hazard registration, and driver training. The lines of business influence the decisions of the central BT group as they are fairly autonomous groups who implement policies that suit their business needs.

### Forums

A Motor Risk Forum within BT, comprised of members from different functional groups across the country, drives road safety policy from a risk assurance perspective. This forum meets to discuss road safety ideas within the lines of business. Reports on incidents and insurance claims are made available to the lines of business so senior managers know the incident statistics within their own group.

There is also a Vehicle Development Forum, comprised of a different group of individuals from the Motor Risk Forum. This group involves operational engineers who can make useful suggestions with regards to vehicle modifications, such as where to place racks in the back of vans, for example. This Forum would also design additional safety features, where needed.

Occupational road safety guidance is available for comment by all employees. The current guidance available to employees is:

- *Health and Safety Handbook, Driving at Work*
- *Commercial Vehicle Drivers Handbook*
- *Drivewise - Driving at Work*
- *Turning Point*

In addition, there are fleet managers in charge of the various BT commercial and company car fleets.

## **OCCUPATIONAL ROAD RISK GUIDANCE**

In the early 1990s, BT developed a road safety policy in response to serious car crashes involving members of staff as well as the public. These incidents identified driving as one of the highest risk activities carried out by staff. BT state that they periodically review the performance of all its people who drive as a part of their work.

Commercial vehicles are bought directly from the Ford manufacturer. Vehicle specifications and safety features are a collaborative effort between Ford and BT. Base models are required to have safety features such as head restraints and air bags.

### **What the guidance covers**

The organisation's comprehensive management of occupational road risk covers:

- Driving standards
- Driver distraction
- Restrictions on driving time
- Performance review
- Reporting of road traffic accidents and incidents
- Care and maintenance of vehicles

## **ROAD SAFETY PROCEDURES**

The following procedures are included in the programme:

Risk assessment	Predominantly in the form of driver assessment. No formal risk assessments carried out.
Driver training	Turningpoint is a driver training course delivered to BT by a third party. A driver is put on the Turningpoint course when they have been involved in certain types of road accidents and where they are deemed to be at fault. The training involves a half-day classroom based workshop and then a half-day one-to-one practical behind the wheel using the driver's vehicle.
Driver assessments / permit to drive	Driver assessments using computer software, Riva 4DI.
Alternative means of transport	Alternative means of transport is encouraged, and there is no limitation on overnights or plane/train travel. In addition, there is a growing use of video and tele-conferencing facilities in order to reduce travel to external meetings.
Guidance on mobile phone use/hands free sets etc	This is covered in the guidance document as no using of hand-held mobiles, however hands-free kits are still used by BT drivers. This is an issue under constant debate. What is defined in the policy is that no outgoing calls are to be made, and incoming calls

	should be brief. All calls go to a messaging facility so there is always a way to get in contact with the driver. Less than 1% of commercial vehicles have hands-free kits inside.
Vehicle maintenance procedures	The commercial fleet is managed internally by BT. Commercial vehicles are maintained in 90 BT workshops around the country. Some company cars are also maintained in the workshops, although company cars tend to be managed as a separate fleet. A formal scheme of car auditing is also carried out. A car audit will cover the condition and roadworthiness of the car as well as a check of safety equipment. All Divisions, with support from the Safety Consultancy Unit, will ensure that vehicle and document checks are undertaken.
Vehicle Loading	The guidance outlines the logistics of large or heavy vehicle loads, capacity of the driver, and minimising injury.
Journey scheduling	The guidance discusses personal responsibility. Necessity of travel is a significant issue especially if meetings can be conducted via video or tele-conferencing facilities. Adverse weather is also a consideration in journey planning. More recognition of journey planning started when a staff member caught for speeding was interviewed by senior management and found that he was criss-crossing the country trying to make several meetings in one day. More planning by managers has reduced this sort of schedule. A cost-benefit and risk assessment is done on the journey planned to assess transport options.
Breakdown assistance and Emergency Planning	Breakdown assistance is divided between company cars and commercial vehicles, however the procedures for both include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to telephone (BT internal breakdown service)</li> <li>• Procedures for what to do for breakdowns on a motorway</li> </ul>
Incident reporting	Accident reporting is detailed in the guidance document. Drivers have a responsibility to report incidents first to the police, and then to their line manager. In addition, a contracted accident management company deals with all claims, including taking calls from drivers, taking incident details, and arranging for repairs and replacement vehicles. BT pay for all damage on vehicles.
Hire Cars	Guidance on becoming familiar with the vehicle's control before proceeding with the journey.
Tiredness/Fatigue	Individuals are encouraged not to drive for more than 3 hours continuously without taking a short break from driving.
Drugs/Alcohol	Guidance on the potential for certain drugs to cause tiredness, alter perception, or increase reaction time.

## **SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF PROCEDURES**

### ***Drivewise - Driving at Work***

The principle aim of the Drivewise policy is 'to ensure that risks arising from driving at work are recognised as an integral part of BT's overall health and safety policy, and to ensure that the established systems and procedures for the management of health and safety in general are used to the management of occupational road risk.

Each Divisional forum will be responsible for referring individuals for driving improvement training. This training will be recommended in cases where there is an increased risk to the

individual's safety or the safety of the public in general. Referral will be recommended for the following indicative criteria where the BT driver is at fault:

- Three or more impacts in any 24 month period.
- Accidents which result in significant damage to either BT or the third party vehicle.
- Accidents which result in serious injury to a third party.

### ***BT Company Car Policy Guidance Notes***

The policy is distributed to all staff. The document covers in detail all of the information discussed in the table above. Copies of the guidance are kept with the company vehicles.

### ***BT Commercial Vehicle Drivers Handbook***

This handbook was developed for BT's commercial fleet drivers, including:

- Authorisation and conditions for use
- Company image
- Vehicle log sheets
- Modifications to vehicles
- Vehicle allocation
- Defensive driving
- Speed limits
- Reversing
- Use of amber rotating beacons
- Vehicle fires
- Mobile exchange trailers - these are not designed to be towed on public roads, and are moved between sites by low loading vehicles
- Vehicle and trailer checks
- Punctures and fluids checks
- Breakdown procedure
- Accident, theft, vandalism procedures
- Loading vehicles
- Driver hours
- Licencing
- Carriage of dangerous substances

### ***Turningpoint***

The serious and costly road incidents in the early 1990s prompted a driver training programme, subsequently called Turningpoint. This training is under continuous development. Turningpoint consists of various aspects including driver assessments on the road and on the PC. One recent development is a computer-based software package called Riva 4DI, an interactive risk package. BT recognise that the main benefit of having a computer package is that staff are not preoccupied by a mindset where they think they are already good drivers and do not need extra help. Whereas most driver training involves an assessment of the driver by an examiner, the computer package makes an assessment of the driver based on their responses to a series of online questions based on psychometrics, problem-solving, highway code, and observation.

After answering a series of questions, the drivers can be given a numerical result. BT safety consultants break the results into three parts in order to create an assessment of the driver:

- 1) Psychometric
- 2) Pass, certificate of highway code, given an online training pack
- 3) Fail, low performance or high risk

Individuals who are seen as high risk must then take the Turningpoint driver training on the road. In addition, any BT employee who had more than one accident, or an accident exceeding a cost of £2500, must go on the Turningpoint training.

Once a driver is deemed a candidate for the Turningpoint training, they then undergo a two-part training course. Part One is a half-day classroom based workshop and Part Two, three weeks later, is a half-day of one-to-one practical 'behind the wheel' coaching using the driver's vehicle in the local work area.

Satisfactory completion of the Turningpoint training course will allow the driver to be removed from the Turningpoint training catchment.

## **AUDITING AND REVIEW**

There are formalised Safety Management and Environmental Management Systems at BT which encompass auditing and review of all policies, including occupational road safety.

The following are specifically included in the review and audit arrangements:

- Accident statistics are reviewed on a quarterly basis
- Areas of high risk are identified to ensure that appropriate remedial action is implemented
- Action Plans to deal with problem areas constitute part of the Divisional Safety plans and are monitored through to completion in the same way that other health and safety issues are monitored
- An overall performance report is completed for the Motor Risk Forum on a quarterly basis

During Safety Forums with the lines of business, internal costs and incident reports are issued with a list of drivers, their age, vehicle registration, amount paid by insurance, and details of the incident.

Driver training is appraised during annual review process. Driving licences are also checked during this annual review.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Performance measures include a reduction in road accidents, which correlates with a reduction in sickness absence due to work-related driving injuries. Reduced costs of road accidents and repairs are considered other performance measures.

In addition, the improved driving safety of drivers who have completed Turningpoint training is another performance measure.

## **COST AND BENEFITS**

Initial costs of assessing drivers through the PC-based medium is about £11 per driver. There are currently 200 people on trial using the Riva 4DI package.

BT estimates that work-related road traffic accidents account for £26 million per year over the last couple of years, although this has been reducing over time. It costs £1 million per year to put people through driving training, including participation in Turningpoint, with beneficial results.

Benefits of an occupational road safety policy are seen to be multiple. The benefit to employee welfare is seen as a great advantage as this means there is less disruption to business due to accident costs and personal injury.

Another benefit of safe driving is considered to be company image. If BT drivers behave conscientiously on the roads, this image is relayed to the general public.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

One of the main observations revealed during the implementation of road safety policy is that it is difficult to change the attitude of people who already believe they are good drivers.

One important aspect of implementing the safe driving scheme was to have senior management participation, and then develop appropriate teams and forums to implement the policy throughout the business.

The main obstacle to implementing the policy is changing the mindset of people who feel they don't need additional help in driving. It is felt that managers should go out driving with their staff to learn their attitudes towards driving as well as their driving ability. The rule of thumb is that if the managers are afraid to get in the car with someone, chances are that that staff member could do with some training!

## **CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

An area where BT is hoping to develop is to train more staff to learn accident investigation. Currently, there are issues where the root cause of accidents cannot be appropriately assessed as divisional staff are not educated in investigating accidents.

Currently, BT is hoping to provide a more focused company Intranet site devoted to driving issues to be accessible at all times to everyone.

It is hoped that with the organisational changes, key individuals will still be able to keep occupational road safety at the forefront of health and safety issues across the company. This will be aided by key staff members at BT among the various divisions, and outside health and safety consultants working in a close relationship with BT.