

Case Study Nine



BACKGROUND

The Highland Council, with its headquarters in Inverness, employs 11704 employees. 650 are employed in Roads and Transport Services (RTS), which forms the focus of this case study. The RTS responsibilities include road maintenance, winter maintenance, traffic signs, street lighting, radio communications and harbour operations. Vehicle maintenance is undertaken internally. In addition, there is an in-house Consultancy providing a wide-ranging engineering design service.

NATURE OF OPERATION AND DRIVING ACTIVITIES

RTS control a fleet of 878 vehicles including vans & lorries as well as specialist vehicles such as excavators, refuse wagons, snowblowers and tower wagons. Many employees drive a variety of vehicles ranging from small ride-on grass cutters in summer to large snowploughs in winter. Employees are expected to be much more flexible regarding the kinds of vehicles they drive than they used to be as the Council tries to maintain a core team of drivers.

THE POLICY

Why the policy was developed

There is a general Health and Safety Policy that covers driving activities. However, specific guidance was developed due to the specialist nature of the vehicles and the risks associated with the activities carried out in RTS.

Who developed the policy

The general service policy was developed by the Senior Engineer (Training /Health and Safety) in RTS, over 10 years ago and subsequently developed into specific guidance. This Training/Health and Safety Engineer works closely with the Fleet Manager who is responsible for procurement and fleet maintenance through area workshops etc. Safety reps are consulted through local and central safety committees. In addition there is an annual refresher course that provides updates on policy and procedure and a forum for RTS employees to raise concerns and to discuss ideas.

What the policy covers

The RTS specific policy covers the following issues:

- Vehicle / Plant operation
- Accidents

- Speed limits
- Routine Maintenance
- Loading / Unloading
- Small dump trucks
- Forklift trucks

How the policy is communicated and implemented

The content of this policy / guidance is communicated on recruitment at the Health and Safety Induction course. This message is reinforced in the RTS health and safety manual provided to all employees.

ROAD SAFETY PROCEDURES

The following procedures are included in the policy

Risk Assessment	Generic risk assessments are conducted where possible. However employees are issued with RA forms (printed on the back of worksheets). These are used for non-routine or unusual tasks / circumstances.
Driver Training	Health and Safety induction training is provided on recruitment. In addition there is a refresher & update training annually, focusing on specific relevant issues. Some drivers have also received driving skills training and other specialist training as and when required. Detailed Training Records are kept on a computer-networked system and reports of refreshers / renewals printed off regularly and followed up.
Vehicle Maintenance Procedures	There are in-house vehicle workshops & all non-routine maintenance is reported to and followed through by Workshop Managers.
Journey Scheduling	The risks associated with particular routes and depots are assessed and control measures implemented / recommended.
Incident Report	Employees are encouraged to report any incident, however small. They are also encouraged to report significant near misses that may have resulted in harm to individuals and public. This near miss reporting is analysed by the RTS health & safety and training team. Insurance claims for damage are analysed by the insurance company, see attachment 1
Campaigns	Particular issues are identified, There has been a large campaign on Reversing Vehicles.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF PROCEDURES

Reversing Campaign

A Campaign was launched in spring 2000 in order to address the greatest cause of incidents in the RTS. Support for this campaign was further encouraged following a fatality to a member of the public during a reversing manoeuvre. A policy statement on 'Reversing of Vehicles' was developed and issued in November 2000. Consequently a campaign was launched, which has three phases.

- Phase one : Raising Awareness
 Phase two : Route Planning
 Phase three : Provision of Reversing Aids

Commitment to these initiatives have been publicly stated through the national 'Working Well Together' campaign action plans - see www.wwt.uk.com/actionplanresults (see attachment 2).

Phase One: Raising Awareness

This awareness training takes the form of a PowerPoint presentation given by the Training/ Health and Safety Engineer, lasting approx. 2 hours for driving crew members, their supervisors and managers. The main features of the training are:

- Safe systems of work
- Case histories of: accidents, prosecutions and claims relating to reversing incidents. Examples have been carefully selected to include vehicles and activities familiar to the audience; damage to vehicles; damage to property.
- Hazard spotting, using photographs of real situations. Audience is requested to identify risks in: depot layout; vehicle layout; driver's errors; misleading signals.
- Controlling risks
- Hand signals
- Reversing aids
- Requests for Assistance
- Progress on the campaign

Drivers reported that this awareness training has been extremely helpful in reinforcing the message, particularly for a routine manoeuvre when it is so easy to become complacent. The case histories were thought to have a significant impact as it reminds drivers that serious accidents can happen to ordinary people in ordinary routine situations.

Phase Two: Route Planning

The route risk assessment is conducted for set routes by supervisors & managers who have a very good knowledge of the routes and are in contact with the drivers. The route risk assessment covers:

- Special Difficulties:
 - narrow roads
 - steep gradients
 - awkward junctions
 - turning areas
 - access to stockpiles
 - welfare facilities
 - remoteness
 - communications black spots
 - support arrangements
- Resources:
 - Trained personnel
 - Suitable plant and equipment
 - Materials and facilities
- Controlling Risks:
 - Minimise reversing
 - Select suitable locations
 - Consider visibility
 - Consider people
 - Consider obstructions and hazards

- Check what's behind
- Using a Banksman
 - High visibility clothing
 - Stand to side
 - Give clear signals

Phase Three: provision of reversing aids

It was recognised that training in itself could not eliminate all accidents caused by reversing. There will be times when reversing is necessary and it is not always possible to see continuously behind the vehicle even when the procedures of checking behind the vehicle are carried out. Consequently it was recognised that reversing aids would contribute to the aim of reducing reversing accidents. The following aids have been fitted to relevant vehicle groups.

- Reversing lamps
- Reversing audible alarms
- Wide-angle lenses
- Convex Mirrors
- Rear view cameras

The Fleet Manager has liaised with vehicle manufacturers on provision of alarms and beacons and vehicles are now generally specified to have these included. Rear view cameras have been purchased separately as they cannot be purchased as a standard on most vehicles (see attachment 3). 88 rear view cameras have been fitted to date. Drivers reported that these are invaluable in improving visibility.

COSTS AND BENEFITS

The cost of reversing accidents and incidents is extensive. Whilst it is too early to quantify direct improvements after only a few months, it is expected that there will be a significant reduction in actual harm to individuals and costs of vehicles and property maintenance. The camera systems cost around £600 each but the benefits are already expected to far outweigh the costs.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is important to always consult with employees in identifying hazards and selecting the most appropriate equipment such as reversing aids. Employees highlighted that the original specification on the cameras were not very good in terms of picture quality and set-up. Subsequently these were changed to a higher specification which are of a better quality and much more effective.

CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

A number of incidents have highlighted significant variations in application of the safe system of work for reversing vehicles. Consequently, a fourth phase is planned for the campaign. This will involve practical assessment of individual drivers and will highlight improvements/ skill requirements of individuals for work activities, which involve reversing.

Highlands Council Attachment 1

3. CLAIMS DETAILS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 An analysis of the claims made in the period 1st April 1996 to 3rd May 2000 has been carried out. The data has been provided from the Council's own computerised database.

The data for the period 1st April 1996 to 3rd May 2000 is shown below. This information is shown graphically in the Appendix to this report.

Year	Numbers	Costs
1996/97	189	£149,751
1997/98	307	£214,045
1998/99	259	£262,596
1999/00	225	£265,674
Total	980	£892,066

3.2 The data has been split by cause codes:

Cause	Number	% of Total	Cost	% of Total
Reversing	220	22%	£144,479	16%
Other	174	18%	£170,211	19%
Hit oncoming vehicle	108	11%	£114,089	13%
Weather	80	8%	£50,061	6%
Hit Third Party Vehicle	68	7%	£71,971	8%
Hit by Third Party	58	6%	£30,063	3%
Insured veh left road	46	5%	£56,294	6%
Loading/Unloading	44	4%	£80,056	9%
Vandalism/Theft	40	4%	£41,417	5%
Attempt to avoid collision	39	4%	£27,267	3%
Damaged whilst parked	23	4%	£5,071	1%
Windscreen	21	2%	£7,722	1%
Fire - mechanical	13	1%	£65,679	7%
Hit parked vehicle	13	1%	£6,469	1%
Hit pedestrian/animal	12	1%	£15,231	2%
Roundabout/Crossroads	10	1%	£2,512	0%
Underground Services	9	1%	£1,835	0%
Multiple Collision	2	0%	£1,639	0%
Total	980	100	£892,066	100

Highlands Council Attachment 2



Working Well Together	
ACTION PLAN FOR:	The Highland Council
Describe the problem you are going to tackle	Safer Reversing of Vehicles (Part 1 - Training)
Describe the action you are going to take to solve the problem	Training for all relevant employees on drivers safe work practices. First priority given to drivers of large Roads & Transport vehicles and plant.
How will you decide if you have been successful?	Fewer accidents due to reversing and a reduction in related damage claims to vehicles and property
How will you communicate what you are doing to your work force?	Via scheduled meetings and regular updates/refreshers. Participants are encouraged to actively contribute to their health and safety training - feedback is welcome
How will you communicate what you are doing to other firms or organisations that may find it useful?	Information passed on to Health & Safety Working Groups and to Professional Bodies and Trade Associations, eg through HSE, IOSH, APSE & ADLO.
When do you expect to complete this work?	Training well under way for Roads & Transport drivers. Performance analysis ongoing and reviewing will continue. Reporting to management at regular planning meetings.

Working Well Together	
ACTION PLAN FOR:	The Highland Council
Describe the problem you are going to tackle	Safer Reversing of Vehicles (Part 2 - Route Planning)
Describe the action you are going to take to solve the problem	Some transport routes and depot layouts involve a tricky and awkward reversing manoeuvres. Fixed routes are being reviewed to reduce reversing operations and to select suitable locations for reversing. Layout of depots is being reviewed to more clearly define reversing and turning areas and to further extend the use of one-way systems and speed limits.
How will you decide if you have been successful?	Fewer accidents due to reversing and a reduction in related damage claims to vehicles and property.
How will you communicate what you are doing to your work force?	Awareness sessions as described in Part 1 - Training. Also network of meetings and regular update sessions.
How will you communicate what you are doing to other firms or organisations that may find it useful?	Information passed on to Health and Safety Working Groups and to Professional Bodies and Trade Associations, eg through APSE/ADLO, IOSH, FTA and HSE Site Safe Scotland committee.
When do you expect to complete this work?	Under 6 Months; fixed routes for winter maintenance are first priority for review: review of depots and premises under way.

Working Well Together	
ACTION PLAN FOR:	The Highland Council
Describe the problem you are going to tackle	Safer Reversing of Vehicles (Part 3 - Reversing Aids)
Describe the action you are going to take to solve the problem	Some Council owned vehicles have large 'blind spots' to the rear which significantly restrict visibility for drivers and contribute to difficulties when reversing. All such vehicles are being fitted with reversing aids or alarms as appropriate on a priority basis. Examples are: audible alarms, convex mirrors, fresnel lenses and rear-facing CCTV cameras with in-cab monitors. Specifications for new vehicles are being enhanced and existing vehicles are being retro-fitted to similar standards.
How will you decide if you have been successful?	Fewer accidents due to reversing and a reduction in related damage claims to vehicles and property.
How will you communicate what you are doing to your work force?	Awareness sessions for all relevant drivers and supervisory management as described in Part 1 - Training. Also via formal and informal meetings which encourage feedback and wider involvement in health & safety issues.
How will you communicate what you are doing to other firms or organisations that may find it useful?	Information passed on to Health & Safety Working Groups and to Professional Bodies and Trade Associations, eg through Site Safe Scotland Committee, IOSH, APSE/ADLO and FTA.
When do you expect to complete this work?	Under 6 Months for vehicles under control of Roads & Transport services - others to follow. Progress is kept under review at management meetings.

Highlands Council Attachment 3

