

Case Study Sixteen

Ault Brothers Timber Merchants

BACKGROUND

Ault Brothers is a small timber merchants company that distributes across The Wirral and in Liverpool City centre. It is a family-run company that has 15 employees.

NATURE OF OPERATION AND DRIVING ACTIVITIES

The organisation has one 7.5 tonne lorry and 1 transit van. There are two drivers within the company, the driver of the 7.5 tonne vehicle drives approximately 250 to 300 miles per week, whilst the transit van driver tends to drive approximately 150 to 200 miles per week.

THE POLICY

Why the policy was developed

The organisation has been looking at Health and Safety issues over the past few years and subsequently decided that they should develop something for the driving safety area of the business. The company also had a routine visit from an Environmental Health Officer who gave them a standard questionnaire to work through. The questionnaire contributed to the Company Director's decision to consider various Health and Safety issues.

Who developed the policy

The Company Director is responsible for the Health and Safety policy and procedures within the organisation. The risk assessment was developed in a meeting where the two owners of the company (one of which is the aforementioned Company Director) simply discussed the hazards that might arise when driving on company business.

What the policy covers

The company's Road Safety 'Risk Assessment' covers the following risks / issues:

- Road Traffic Accident (RTA) – generally
- RTA – due to using a mobile phone
- Driver tiredness
- Drugs, alcohol, and exhaust gases
- Unsafe vehicle
- Being run into by another vehicle whilst broken down
- Adverse weather
- Reversing into someone
- Theft of vehicle resulting in RTA
- Vehicle rolling away whilst unattended
- Ropes, straps etc. snapping or otherwise failing
- Load becoming loose
- Vehicles overtaking whilst driver unloading
- Vehicle crashing into rear of wagon at night when tailgate is down
- Overhanging loads
- Removing goods from vehicle
- Injury due to manual handling

A full copy of the Risk Assessment is provided in attachment 1.

How the policy is communicated and implemented

The Company Director communicated the Risk Assessment to the 2 drivers by providing them with a face-to-face explanation and giving them a copy to keep in their vehicle.

ROAD SAFETY PROCEDURES

The following procedures are included in the risk assessment:

Risk assessment	See list of risks / issues above and also further details in specific examples section below
Guidance on mobile phone use/hands free sets etc	Phone to be switched off whilst vehicle is being driven. Driver to check for messages at delivery addresses. Driver to make calls whilst stationary, handbrake applied, and engine out of gear.
Vehicle maintenance procedures	Vehicles are properly maintained and inspected regularly. Any faults are to be reported immediately and appropriate action taken.
Journey scheduling	The wagons are driven by experienced drivers who only work normal hours. The delivery distances are small.
Driver tiredness	Statutory minimum breaks / rest periods must be taken. Drivers must report to Management if they feel unfit to drive.
Adverse weather conditions	Drivers should modify their driving to suit conditions. In exceptionally bad conditions they should pull off the road or as far in to the side of the road as possible. They should not continue with the journey until it is safe to do so.
Drugs / alcohol / exhaust gases	If a driver feels that they are under the influence of any drug or exhaust gases, and therefore unfit to drive, they must inform Management immediately, no matter where they are, and not attempt to drive.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF PROCEDURES

Risk Assessment

The company Risk Assessment is an informative document developed to provoke drivers' reflection upon the various risks that may arise when driving for work. A full copy of the risk assessment is provided in attachment 1. The risk assessment consists of a table with the following sections:

- Risk (a list of the risks can be viewed above in the 'what the policy covers' section)
- Level (i.e. low, medium, high)
- Who might be harmed
- Evaluation (what the risk might entail)
- Proposal (appropriate action to be taken to combat the risk)

COSTS AND BENEFITS

The costs of developing and implementing the risk assessment are minimal, simply involving the time of the staff writing and approving the policy. It was implemented proactively and not as a result of a high number of accidents / incidents when driving. The company has not experienced a vehicle accident for many years. The benefits are therefore non-tangible, but are seen as raising the drivers' awareness of the possible risks and as a formalisation of what are largely seen as 'common sense' steps to ensuring safety.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Company Director has stated that the risk assessment needs to be reviewed and updated, as more potential risks have come to the attention of the employees and drivers.

CURRENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The risk assessment is going to be reviewed and updated in the near future, e.g. a driver has pointed-out the risk of driving near schools when children are due to come out. The policy will therefore be changed so that the delivery routes avoid school areas at finishing times. The Company Director is also looking into appointing a Health and Safety Advisor to assist him in the development and implementation of all Health and Safety issues.

Ault Brothers Timber Merchants Attachment 1

Risk	Level	Who might be harmed	Evaluation	Proposal
1. Road Traffic Accident (RTA) - Generally	Low	Anyone	Wagons are kept in good road-worthy condition and are driven by experienced drivers. Drivers only work normal hours and delivery distances are small.	None.
2. RTA due to using mobile phone	High	People and Property	Serious danger of distraction if phone rings whilst Vehicle is being driven. Also dangerous if used whilst vehicle is being driven.	Phone to be switched off whilst vehicle is being driven. Driver to check for messages at delivery addresses. Driver to make calls whilst stationary, handbrake applied and engine out of gear.
3. Driver Tiredness	Low	People and Property	Danger of reduced alertness and in severe cases falling asleep.	Statutory minimum breaks - rest periods must be taken. Drivers must report to management if they feel unfit to drive.
4. Drugs, Alcohol and Exhaust Gas's	Low	People and Property	Alcohol. Medicinal and recreational drugs and Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂) from exhaust emissions can all affect a person's mental state. It is therefore dangerous to drive. Operate machinery or even load, unload or carry materials.	If a driver feels that they are under the influence of any drug or gas and are therefore unfit to drive they must inform management immediately, no matter where they are, and not attempt to drive.
5. Unsafe vehicle	Low	People and Property	Danger from poor brakes, steering, damaging lights, bits falling off etc.	Vehicle to be properly maintained and inspected regularly. Any faults are to be reported immediately and appropriate action taken.
6. Being run into by another vehicle whilst broken down	Med	Both drivers and vehicles and other motorists/vehicles	Possibility of an RTA exists if a vehicle is parked on a busy road. This risk increases both with volume of traffic and any reduction in visibility.	Driver to pull in to side of road as much as possible, keep lights on and put hazard warning lights on. Help should be sought by phone. If on Motorway or other busy road, the driver should leave cab and place warning triangle 100m behind vehicle.
7. Adverse Weather	Low	People and Property	Adverse weather (ice, snow, heavy rain, fog etc) does not affect safety.	Drivers should modify their driving to suit conditions. In exceptionally bad conditions they should pull off the road or as far in to the side of the road as possible. They should not continue with the journey until it is safe to do so.
8. Reversing into someone	Med	Pedestrians particularly children	Possibility of reversing into someone either in the yard when delivering.	Audible signal fitted to both vehicles. Hazard warning lights to be used.

9. Theft of vehicle resulting in RTA	Low	People and Property	Vehicle could be stolen whilst driver is away from it.	Engine to be stopped and keys removed when driver exits cab.
10. Vehicle rolling away whilst unattended	Low	People and Property	Possibility of vehicle rolling away if handbrake is not applied properly.	Handbrake to be applied and vehicle left in gear.
11. Ropes, straps etc. snapping or otherwise falling	Low	People and Property	If not properly stored and maintained ropes, straps, etc. can fail under load.	All ropes, straps etc. are to be correctly stored and are to be inspected regularly for fraying and damage to any ratchet mechanism. Ratchets should be regularly.
12. Load becoming loose	Med	People and Property	If loads are unsecured or uncontained by the tailgate, sideboards etc.. they could swing out over the sides of the vehicle and in some cases drop off.	It is the driver's responsibility to ensure loads are properly secured. Any ropes, straps etc. should be regularly inspected during journey.
13. Vehicles overtaking whilst driver unloading	High	People and Property	Driver could be hit by passing vehicle or materials being unloaded could distract other drivers or hit passing vehicles.	Driver to park vehicle so that unloading is from kerbside or at rear. Driver to wear HI-Vis jacket/waistcoat whilst delivering.
14. Vehicle crashing into rear of wagon at night when tailgate is down.	Med	Other road users	Lowering tailgate obscures rear lights.	Reflectors fitted to inside of tailgate.
15. Overhanging loads	High	Other road users	Danger of other road users running into overhanging load, particularly in poor light or other adverse conditions.	Warning triangle to be fitted to loads overhanging more than 1.2 m.
16. Removing goods from vehicle	High	Pedestrians	Pedestrians, particularly children could be hit whilst removing, transporting or loading goods.	Driver to look all around <u>before</u> pulling goods from vehicle. Extra care is required when carrying goods around corners or in windy conditions.
17. Injury due to manual handling	Low	Driver	Manual handling if not practised properly can cause problems with joints and muscles. We have discussed problems with drivers and suggested some sort of trolley. Due to delivering into peoples homes trolleys not considered to be helpful. All drivers experienced in manual handling.	None.