

## Could you show that management reviews or evaluates training?

A very simple question, but could you answer 'yes' and be 100% honest with your answer? Could you support your answer in court?

The key to a successful safety program in any organization is management believing and supports it. If you can say this you are well on the way to getting a return on your investment into safety.

## Load Securement

Our economy has not yet taken the positive turn that we had hoped for. As a result, we are all looking for ways to trim costs. Unfortunately, without thinking about it, we may be jeopardizing safety or opening ourselves up to unnecessary risks.

When securement straps fray around the hardware, they should not be sent out for repair stitching. Ask yourself if the contractor is reputable; are they going to stand behind their work if the stitching ruptures and the load spills all over the highway and possibly causes injury or death?

Although 're-use' and 'recycle' are important for a sustainable world, it may not be your best option in a case like this.

Think about straps that are starting to show their age. If they are looking weathered they may not have the strength to support the job that they were intended to do.

Secondly, I would like to address straps that are available from off-shore suppliers. Although you may be saving money up front, you should question whether the product meets North American safety standards. In the worst case scenario where there is a lawsuit as a result of a traffic fatality, the prosecutor is not going to even mention the off-shore supplier. You will be solely responsible for the result of any unfortunate events.

Remember that product standards are made to protect you. If you decide not to follow the standards you may pay a heavy price. Don't rely on the old saying that 'it is only against the law if you get caught'; it's only a matter of time before your luck runs out.

*"Safety is not a system that can be simply imposed on an operation; instead it is a way of operating that spreads into the business and the thinking of its employees."*

John Wettstein

**Mike Kroetsch offers safety consulting which gives you access to 37 years of transportation safety and compliance experience.**

**In the past year Mike has shared many of his safety experiences with fleets looking to raise the bar on driver safety.**

**Literature regarding:**

- speed limiters,
  - construction zones,
  - auto slacks,
  - seat belts,
  - ABS Systems, and
  - winter driving
- can be found at MTO offices or at truck inspection stations.**

**These documents and tips can be displayed in driver's room, inserted with their pay stubs or referenced during safety talks.**

**In this issue:**

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Injury Prevention or WSIB

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Fleet Insurance

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Your Commercial Vehicle Operators Registration

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Ads in Magazines

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Lift Truck Training

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## Injury Prevention or WSIB (take your pick)

I was working with a fleet and we were discussing past WSIB cases. We divided them into two areas. One was minor injuries and small claims. The other was larger claims and lost time.

In one scenario we discovered that one of the drivers with about 4 years of service was off for about 3 months every winter. This one person accounted for over 50% of the company's lost-time injuries alone.

It was decided that this driver should be called in and spoken to about these injuries in a positive way. In a non-threatening manner, I informed the driver that we have been analyzing the WSIB claims and that his file had emerged for review and action. We discussed his claims and the fact that in the last 4 years that he had over 200 days of lost time as a result of WSIB claims. We discussed his injuries which were all related to preventable slips and falls. He was given some literature on this topic and asked if he could help us to solve this problem as we do not want to see anyone get hurt.

As a result, this was the first winter in his history with the company that he did not have any WSIB claim. Was the company just lucky or was there something in what we did? It is hard to say for sure, but I think that when you have a problem like this one, it is worth discussing with the worker. If it is fraudulent, the discussion lets him know that you are monitoring the claim and he will be less likely to pursue any untrue claims. If it is legitimate, the passive training may be what it takes to solve the problem and prevent any future injuries.

Our work did not stop there. We also reviewed what the company was doing in regard to modified work. Being in the trucking industry for over 36 years, I know that there are a lot of variables involved that can reduce the opportunities to implement a return to work program.

If you have jobs at your workplace that you use for modified work or early and safe return to work programs I would like to hear about them.

## Fleet Insurance

At insurance renewal time it is important to inform the insurer of operating changes.

The two most important changes to disclose are with respect to commodities and lanes traveling. Some commodities are high risk such as electronics, alcohol and tobacco. Be aware that low-value commodities can be a theft risk as they are often easily sold. Furthermore, some dangerous goods may place a carrier in a higher risk bracket.

Lanes traveled could have an impact on your insurance premium. The most obvious is travel into the US. Depending on the area you are entering, the theft risk and collision rates may also be higher. Insurance lawsuit settlements in the US can be into the millions of dollars. Lanes of travel could either increase or decrease your miles/kilometers traveled.

All this adds up to costs or savings with respect to your insurance premium. Either way, it is far better to incur the cost to be confident that your insurance is going to cover the load in case of loss due to theft or collision.

## Your Commercial Vehicle Operators Registration (CVOR)

In that last year there have been some changes to the CVOR as well as the MTO Facility Audit process. These changes may or may not change the way you are currently operating your fleet or viewing safety within your fleet.

One thing that you are going to see is an increase of points assigned for violations road side or detected by the MTO in an audit. When accumulated, an excessive amount of points will trigger a friendly visit from the MTO. In a best case scenario they may just warn you that you are headed in the wrong direction and point out a few particulars and ask you what your intentions are to prevent re-occurrence of these problems. In the worst case scenario MTO may perform a full audit in which case you could be in big trouble unless you have plans and programs in place.

I support proactivity when it comes to safety. Many will say that they believe the same, but do they practice what they believe in; or in the case of a safety person, what you preach?

To be proactive you have to know what potential problems are relevant to your fleet and drivers. You have to have measures in place such as training (classroom, in cab or one-on-one to prevent re-occurrence). You have to be consistent in implementing the programs, which can be particularly difficult in a union environment.

An important step in becoming proactive is to build an "Action Plan" including obtainable goals. There are some off-the-shelf computer programs that can be used to monitor this for you. For a smaller fleet, your Action Plan can successfully be a simple Word document or a file folder.

I suggest that you consult a third party consultant to provide a fresh perspective with respect to your safety program. This is important because in addition to getting an outside point of view, you are receiving years of experience and best practices advice.

During the summer months it is a good time to start planning for a fall Safety Talk with drivers. TS&CS is available to come into your facility and review some of your policies, collision reports, driver logs and inspection reports in order to design a unique training program for your fleet.

The following is a list of topics that I have had success with and positive driver feedback over the last few months:

- Anti Lock Braking Systems
- Balance Between Work & Play
- Blind Spots
- Bus Stops
- Road Rage
- Drug & Alcohol Policy
- Vehicle clearances & Obstructions
- Preventable/Non Preventable Collisions
- Fuel Conservation
- Intersection Safety
- Fatigue
- Rail Road Crossings
- CVOR
- School Zones
- Driver Distractions
- Backing
- Off-road Driving
- Wildlife
- Construction Zones
- Roundabouts
- Driver Demerit Points
- Winter Adverse Conditions
- Emergency Vehicles

**Have a safe summer and don't give safety a summer vacation**

## Advertisements in Transportation Magazines

In April at the local Fleet Safety Council meeting I was talking with people during the break and the subject of trucking magazines came up. Have you noticed the reduction of ads? One of the people in the conversation mentioned that he just finished reading a magazine that had only 4 ads and none were more than half a page in size.

Last weekend I was spring cleaning and came across the December 2008 edition of a popular trucking publication. About half the magazine was advertising for drivers and the other half was a mix of articles and vendor ads.

As a result of lower advertising, magazines are hurting financially. They are compelled to publish interesting stories to meet the circulation to sell the existing ads. A few years ago many of these magazines were paying in the area of \$500 for an article. Now I do not think any of them are paying for freelance writers.

The lack of advertising for drivers stands to reason that there are few jobs available for drivers. In a short period of time we have gone from a driver's market to a carrier's market. But are the carriers taking full advantage of the market? Drivers are being hired because they worked for a long established carrier that in its hay day had won numerous safety awards.

During the days when there was a shortage of drivers, carriers made sure that they did a proper reference check because they did not want to hire someone else's problem driver. Well that is still true and maybe even truer. Let's face it the real good drivers are still driving.

Spend the time; get a proper resume/application from the driver and complete a proper reference check. When you have a potential candidate, call them in for an interview and schedule a road test. Make sure that you see a current driving abstract. Keep in mind that you can always hire a third party such as TS&CS to conduct a driver in-cab evaluation.

## Lift Truck Training

I have been looking at reports and articles related to lift trucks and lift truck training. There are still companies operating lift trucks in Ontario that are not training their operators. The Ministry of Labour inspectors are laying charges against these organizations. Another common lift truck related violation is the failure of evaluating lift truck operators after they have been trained.

In a lift truck accident, the Ministry of Labour will make every effort to prove that the owner of the lift truck was at fault. In some cases, they claim that the lift truck was not a safe piece of machinery. The owner of lift truck provides ammunition to the Ministry by failing to produce daily inspection reports. If you do not inspect the lift truck on a daily basis, how can you prove that it is safe?

If you have transportation related safety topics or questions please forward and I will touch on them in a future edition.

**E mail your comments to [mike@transportationsafetycs.ca](mailto:mike@transportationsafetycs.ca)  
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