

# Newsletter ~ Winter 2009

Transportation **S**afety and **C**ompliance **S**olutions

## Where has the summer gone?

One thing we can say for sure about the summer is that it was a real mixed bag of weather. We had quite hot weather that brought on the humidity, which then turned into wicked thunderstorms, and heavy rains.

For those who had the opportunity to experience some traveling in the family car or the big rig, I'm sure you can agree that if the talk was not about the weather it was about the price of gas or the delays in the construction zones. I ask myself, "why did the MTO wait until the peak weeks of the vacation season to resurface the stretch of 401 between Guelph and Mississauga?" We are reminded of the traffic line-ups in the scorching heat as we now sit in traffic as a result of the unprepared and impatient drivers on the icy winter roads. Unfortunately, most of us must continue to work 12 months of the year and cannot yet afford to flock to hibernation in the south. With that in mind, let's rethink our driving habits in the 4-wheeler or the 18-wheeler.

## Mike's Tips to Safe Winter Driving.

- If you do not have to go out, stay home. This is not a note to say you do not have to go to work. However, use a little common sense in your travel plans.
- If you must go, give yourself extra time.
- Road closed signs are put up for a reason. BAD WEATHER!
- Make sure your vehicle is prepared for the weather. Ensure you have sufficient fuel and windshield washer and pack some extra warm clothes.
- Carry a cell phone and communicate your plans for departure and arrival.
- Have a shovel, sand, salt or kitty litter to help yourself if your vehicle gets stuck.
- I saved the best for last: Drive according to the conditions:
  - Less than the posted speed limit,
  - Maintain an extra safe following distance,
  - Watch out for the other guy or girl (this includes both vehicles and pedestrians),
  - Use extra caution approaching intersections. Take your foot off the accelerator and cover the brake,
  - Look left, right, and left again at all intersections.

***Please Drive Safely***

**The year 2008 was the first year of operation for Transportation Safety & Compliance Solutions (TS&CS). After many years as a fleet safety manager Mike Kroetsch has taken his skills and 36 years of experience to a new level.**

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

**TS&CS has plans to serve the transportation industry in more effective ways in 2009. Mike is in the process of setting up open seminars and safety talks. Stay tuned!**

### **In this issue:**

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## What's the best way to ruin a tire?

Actually, there are a few "best" ways, but improper tire repairs are at the top of the list. So let's discuss the WRONG way to repair a tire.

"Just plug it! Why bother taking the tire off the wheel?"

"Have the kid down at the gas station do it. He began last week and needs the practice."

"An inside patch plus a plug, all done from the inside? Who's got the time for all that? We don't need a stinkin' patch!"

If the above comments sound ridiculous that's because they are. We have heard all these statements, plus a few even crazier ones, and it's too bad because an improper tire repair can ruin a perfectly good \$400 tire in a day – or sometimes even less.

If you aren't interested in throwing your money away by having your tires repaired by amateurs, there is only one thing to do. Seek the service of trained professionals who understand how to properly and safely repair a tire. You'll save in the long run.

## It's Simple but it isn't easy.



You will have to take the time to investigate and research the companies who know how a tire should be repaired. It may take some time, but it will be well worth the effort.

Proper tire repairs are not a cost, but rather an investment that can save your expensive tire and can also save you from having unnecessary (and expensive) down-time caused by a tire repair that went bad because it had not been done properly the first time.

## Take the time to do your homework. You will be glad you did.

From the smallest passenger car tires to the largest off-the-road gigantic tires, there is both a right way and a wrong way to make a tire repair. Don't be suckered into having your tires repaired the wrong way just to save a few dollars. If you do, it will turn into the most expensive "saving" you will ever make.

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## What does it take to give a good driver safety meeting?

It is hard to say what the exact order of priority is to deliver a good driver safety meeting. First of all, I think that the owner of the company should demonstrate that s/he believes in the importance of a safety meeting as opposed to giving the impression that the only reason for it is because the fleet insurance company suggested one.

Here are some other tips that I would like to offer:

- Have an agenda
- Tell the group what the objectives of the meeting are upfront.
- Ask the drivers what they expect to get out of the meeting.
- Involve the drivers, take some of your quality people and ask them to give you some feedback on the hot topics (with regard to safety).
- Keep safety and operation meetings separate. They can be on the same day but should be scheduled separately.
- Never tell the driver that asks a question that their subject is not on the agenda or that this is your safety meeting. If the question is off topic place the question in the parking lot (get to it later) or tell the driver you will be around at break or after the meeting if they would like address it then.
- A good speaker will permit time to ask questions and will acknowledge that the question is a good one.
- It is good to have management in attendance.
- Dispatchers and Route Supervisors should be in attendance. Many companies are afraid that this may result in conflict. If a dispatcher does not know and understand regulations, how can they do their jobs right? How can a dispatcher tell a customer that a delivery will be there on time if he does not know the Hours of Service Regulations? It is also important that they understand the Out of Service criteria for defects found on a daily vehicle inspection.
- In the presentation, give hands-on scenarios, do a pre-trip inspection, talk about some recent collision situations, and talk about the hot company topics with safety at a customer's location.
- A guest speaker is valuable. If you have a safety department the guest speaker will reinforce what they do on a daily basis. If you are going to run the meeting yourself, you may want to address company business and then have the guest speaker talk about safety.



**It is important that you incorporate the above items so that both you and the employees get value from the meeting.**

## Collision Statistics

I recently heard at a meeting that the fatalities involving trucks were on the rise. The speaker was unable to share the exact number.

As well non-prescription and prescription medication are climbing on the list of collision root causes.

## Company Collision Reports

For many years as safety professionals we were insistent that the driver signs the collision report or his collision statement. The reason for this process was mostly for internal use or because the company had a union and required it.

Over the years the school of thought on this matter has changed. This is basically a result of some major US lawsuits where the prosecutor has subpoenaed the driver's files and used the statement against the driver and the carrier. Without the signature it can make it difficult to prove that this was the statement of the driver. My suggestion is to eliminate the driver signature. I have seen some cases where the safety supervisor has signed off that the information was given to them. Next time you are speaking to your legal council ask them what they suggest.

## File Retention

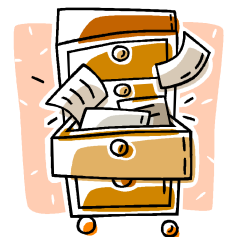
On an audit from the Ministry of Transport or the U.S. Department of Transport one of the items they will be checking for are driver files. Many carriers are keeping everything in the file from day one, which is likely better than nothing; however, keeping a short history in an active file is better. You can keep your dead files for anything beyond 3 years in a locked file in a stock room. It is important to an auditor that they find a current and well-organized filing system.

File purging can be set up to coincide with other requirements such as annual reviews and running driver abstracts

With the current status of the economy many carriers are reorganizing. In short, they are reducing some of the less than desirable drivers. This is good business sense. A word of caution that you have all heard already is to ensure your documentation is in order.

What to document:

- Document the good the bad & the ugly.
- Use progressive discipline (this should be in your employee handbook).
- Do not terminate unless you can prove that termination is justified.
- Legal advice can be a good investment.



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