

Case Study 13: Limousine & Tour Bus Operator

Keywords: Safety Culture / Program Design / Training / In-vehicle monitoring / Peer groups / Packaged Programs / Fatigue / Other Organizations

For this study, “other organizations” are defined as organizations that do not fit in the other three categories (Transit, Trucking and Safety Organizations). The definition included organizations employing other types of professional drivers, as well as employees who drive for their work, but who are not professional drivers. Examples from the “Other Organizations” category can be helpful for all organizations who have the freedom and/or the need to implement new and creative ideas. They may also be helpful for those organizations who are growing and want to think outside the “standard safe driving” box to customizable proactive safety programs.

This example is a Tour bus / Shuttle / Limousine operation with a fleet of 100 vehicles and 150 employees, of which 120 to 130 are drivers. The fleet is very diverse, ranging from simple shuttles to large over-the-road tour buses.

The safety program imbedded in the training function required at on-boarding and on-going. About 70% of the drivers earn their CDL upon hiring. Only the airport service drivers do not have CDLs. Legally separate but treated the same in terms of training. Requirement is ≥ 25 and 3 years driving.

Driver training is based on a standard FMC based driver training program developed by a consultant, purchased with modification by the company, and now used by the International Motorcoach Group (IMG) members (approx. 50). The in-house safety package has been enhanced with Smith System elements. Instructors are Smith certified.

Six week duration in-house trainer for CDL annually (spring) and again as needed. Reduced version provided for non-CDL drivers. There is extensive driver simulation training using state-of-the-practice technology. The simulation training focuses on incidents and hazards, situations and environments. (The Jet Blue / Boston incident involving stuck nose wheel was cited as the motivation for the acquisition and extensive use of simulation based training. “Being prepared for the unexpected.” Multiple cases were cited where simulation training was critical.

There is also heavy state-of-the-practice driver monitoring. The technology provides AI based interpretation of driver and vehicle behavior with feedback to the driver in real time!

Emphasis is on correction rather than discipline. Consequently, training is constant via reminders, individual monitoring / feedback, and targeted retraining. There are also monthly safety “quizzes” and reminders. The goal is to eventually totally replace regular periodic broadcast training with individually targeted training.

Safety Culture dominates the company, stated by name and by practice. In addition to the safety program, they are also a 3rd party inspector for CDL – On-line application but written, road test and practicum administered by company staff. Safety culture ethos extends to the mechanics and facility as well. Examples include switching drivers out for overnight runs even though the hours of operation had not been exceeded.

The company also engages in extensive industry networking. The company is a founding member of a “20 group” consortium of peer organizations since 1999. Initially in response to “captive insurance” program. Extensive sharing of business practices, including safety programs and performance. The peer group functions one of the safety program metrics. Evaluation is an assessment to indicate needed improvements and refinements. The safety programs are totally integrated into the operation of the business.

Regarding evaluation metrics, industry networking / “20 group” peers provide the basis for program assessment and evaluation. Programs / program elements are assessed and adjusted based on trends and history (self-referential) and on peer group statistics (group / practice referential). Data is examined on a monthly basis with adjustments to programs being made quarterly (allowing time to establish trends – avoiding over reaction and time to properly diagnosis an anomaly as a problem). The (NASA?) diagnostic protocol of “five why’s” is used.

Comments / Takeaways

- This limo/tour bus example incorporates an aggressive peer group review. The peer group functions as one of the safety program metrics, used as an assessment to indicate needed improvements and refinements. (Metrics are typically crashes per mileage or calendar period.
- Some of these companies are very small and serious incidents are rare, so the mere occurrence is the metric.) Industry group peers provide the basis for program assessment and evaluation. However, programs and program elements are assessed and adjusted based on trends and history (self-referential) and on peer group statistics (group/practice referential).
- Ongoing and constant training is maintained via reminders, individual driver monitoring, individual driver feedback, and targeted retraining. They also have monthly safety quizzes. All work together to emphasize correction of behaviors rather than discipline.