Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the four steps involved in creating an effective training program.
2. Identify hazards that are common in motor fleet safety, as well as general safety rules that should be observed.
3. Determine methods for stimulating interest in a fleet safety program.
4. Outline the inspection, repair, and maintenance needs of a motor vehicle fleet.
5. Identify the standard equipment all commercial vehicles must have.
6. Explain the responsibilities of a fleet safety director in accident prevention.
7. Discuss the steps involved in organizing accident record systems.
8. Explain the function of an accident investigator.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 8:
Motor Fleet Inspection Program

Chapter 9:
Organizing Motor Fleet Accident Data

Unit Lesson

Required vehicle inspection programs vary depending on the type, size, weight, and use of the vehicle. Periodic inspections are mandatory, for instance, for commercial motor vehicles and school buses. In addition, drivers should complete a pre- and post-trip inspection. During a pre-trip inspection, the driver should discover any obvious problems prior to starting his/her trip, and thus avoid not only the potential for vehicle breakdown, but also possibly avoid an accident due to a mechanical defect. An additional benefit is that pre-trip inspection may discover something that would have resulted in an out-of-service violation.

Truck rodeo competitions are a fun way to find out if drivers truly understand how to conduct pre- and post-trip commercial vehicle inspections. Truck rodeos are generally divided into three areas of competition:

1. A written test to check knowledge of regulations, etc.
2. A vehicle inspection where the tractor-trailer combination is set up with 20 defects, and the drivers are expected to individually locate and list the defects. The more defects the driver locates, the higher their total point total is for that part of the competition.
3. An obstacle course that measures how well drivers know how to operate their vehicles.

In large companies with multiple terminals, this data can be evaluated and trends can be identified that will assist terminal managers and location safety managers to target training to specific groups of drivers. For instance, if a company had a Midwest terminal and 80% of the drivers from that terminal failed to find the vehicle defects at the tractor-trailer combination station, this could indicate that they either are not conducting the inspections at all, or that they do not really know how to inspect their vehicles.

Routine post-trip inspection has its value in providing management, or those responsible for vehicle repair, with the necessary information that only the driver who has operated the vehicle may be aware of. This may assist mechanics to quickly focus in on what the vehicle problem might be.
As a side-note, authorities conducting DOT audits/inspections of a motor carrier examine pre- and post-trip inspection reports and compare them to vehicle maintenance records to determine if a carrier is actually taking action to repair problems that were discovered by commercial vehicle operators.

Fleet accident data is gathered for a number of purposes including identifying the cause of the accident, developing preventative measures that can be used to prevent future accidents, and educating management and other drivers about what types of accidents are occurring in the fleet. In addition, a company accident investigation program can have some value in case of a liability law suit.

Gathering fleet accident data has other potential uses including validating the need and expense of further driver training in a particular subject area. In order to develop a broader viewpoint, reviewing accidents and accident data should not only include your company's accidents, but other sources as well. One particularly good source of information about major current and past accidents and investigations into their causes and recommendations for improvements is the National Transportation Safety Board website located at http://www.ntsb.gov.

Although we may believe we have managed to include every conceivable accident scenario in our driver training and safety meetings, there are many more situations that seldom are thought of until an accident brings the topic to the forefront. For example, driving in low visibility conditions through fog, mist, or smoke may or may not be a specific topic covered in your driver training, or it may only be superficially touched upon. However, it is a condition that is prevalent in many areas of the country during certain seasons and can be extremely hazardous. Just instructing drivers to slow down and turn on head lamps and emergency flashers may not be sufficient enough to prevent a major accident. Whether or not your drivers should be told to pull off the road in these conditions is a company decision, but certainly one that should be clearly communicated.

Let us review a potential situation. A driver encounters a developing low visibility situation and feels he should contact dispatch to notify them that the vehicle is being parked at the local truck stop to wait until the weather clears enough to view the road. The dispatcher puts the manager on the phone who tells the driver that no matter what, the load must go through since they have a contract to deliver the load by 6 a.m. the next morning. The driver resists and tries to argue the point, but the manager insists that he continue. Within 20 miles from truck stop, the driver comes over a rise, and a flatbed truck is stopped in the lane due to an accident ahead. The fog is so thick by now and visibility so low, the driver does not even see the flatbed until the truck plows into the trailer. As a result of the accident, the driver of the flatbed is injured severely in a whiplash type motion from being struck from behind, and the driver of the following truck is fatally injured. Obviously, the driver and the manager were not familiar enough with company policy, the company policy had not been clearly communicated to them, or the manager just ignored company policy.

Fleet accident investigations, when properly conducted, can provide valuable information that can be used to prevent similar accidents in the future. Additionally, in companies where the fleet safety program includes driver accountability, fleet accident investigation can also be used to determine internally if an accident was reasonably preventable. There is a huge difference between an “at fault” determination and what is “reasonably preventable.” A simple example of this difference is a driver who runs a yellow light and has an accident at an intersection. It is not against the law to run a yellow light, and it is unlikely that this driver will be found “at fault” by authorities on the scene. However, the company accident review committee may find that the accident was “reasonably preventable” if the driver had shown ordinary caution when approaching the intersection, slowed down for the yellow light, and looked both ways prior to proceeding.

**Suggested Reading**

Use the CSU Online Library to search for and read the following articles:


Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Reflection Paper

For this activity, you are asked to reflect on the concepts covered in the reading assignment and the Written Lecture, and write about them. What did you understand completely? What did not quite make sense? The purpose of this activity is to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the material you finished reading and to expand upon those thoughts. If you are unclear about a concept, this will give you a chance to write those questions down and email them to your professor for feedback. Can you apply the concepts you learned in this unit toward your career? How?

This is not a summary, but is instead a chance for you to express your thoughts about the material learned in this unit by writing about it.

The reflection paper should meet the following requirements:

- At least one page
- Contain your thoughts about the material and its value to you personally
- Contain any questions you may have concerning the material

Format your writing using APA style. Because this is not a graded assignment, it does not need to be submitted to your professor. This activity was designed to allow you an opportunity to put your thoughts down on paper so you can determine what concepts still may be foreign to you and give you a chance to ask your professor any questions you may have.