

Today's driver of commercial vehicles

I have been doing driver in-cab evaluations for 20 years now. Most of those evaluations were pre-employment. Today I am seeing three different patterns; the first two are good. The first is that drivers are being sent for in cab training or an evaluation on a return to work after being away for a period of time.

The second is that drivers are sent for an evaluation post incident. Now, 15 years ago that driver would likely be terminated, no questions asked.

I am also seeing more pre-employment in-cab evaluations. This is a positive for one big reason and that is the quality of the driver seeking employment is not top shelf. I believe there are two reasons. Primarily, the good drivers are already working and only searching when their current employer closes the doors. The second is that there are entry-level drivers or drivers with minimal experience out there looking. Let's face it, most of the schools focus on helping a driver obtain a drivers license and any skill beyond that is a bonus.

There is no question that a driver straight out of school does require mentoring and that is the responsibility of the carrier. Those drivers that have been in the industry for a short period of time also require mentoring and that time could be just as long as the time spent with a rookie driver. Look at the history of the driver and where they have been. We know what the quality of most carriers is. Those carriers that are running a less than stellar operating authority are likely not investing in any training for the drivers. That negative culture is going to trickle down to the driver as bad habits. In the interview process ask the driver about the training that was offered at previous employers. You may learn something to enhance your program or some information on training needs for this new candidate.

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Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

Thomas Edison

There are still dates available to book your Drivers Spring Safety Talk

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Check out our website www.transportationsafetycs.ca for past issues on the Safety Lane as well as many other interesting articles.

If you have an industry article to share please forward it to mike@transportationsafetycs.ca

Summer takes toll on teen drivers (worth repeating)

By Ashley Halsey III, Published: June 12, 2013

The deadly days have arrived for teenage drivers, along with new data about what makes the warm-weather months so dangerous.

While the overwhelming majority of crashes involving teen drivers are the operators' fault, 40 percent of those interviewed for an insurance industry report said they had no control over whether they got into an accident.

"Seventy-five percent of teen crashes are caused by driver error. It's troubling that so many believe they have no control over whether or not they will crash," said Chris Mullen, director of technology research at State Farm insurance.

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for U.S. teenagers, and preliminary indications are that after declining for several years, they increased in the first half of 2012. A report by the Governors Highway Safety Association, which receives information that states send to a federal database, showed that deaths of teen drivers nationwide increased by 19 percent in the first six months of last year.

Federal data show that the average number of teenagers who die in accidents doubles during the three months that begin when school lets out for the summer. Seven of the 10 deadliest days for teen drivers are clustered in those months, and some of the dates from 2011 are likely party weekends: the last Saturday in June, two days of the July 4 weekend and a Sunday late in August just before universities launch their fall terms.

"Beyond dispute, summertime emerges as the deadliest time of year for teen drivers and passengers," said John B. Townsend II of AAA, who tracks teen fatality statistics. "What's more, weekends are particularly dangerous for teen drivers."

Surprisingly, a study released Tuesday by Ford showed that two-thirds of teen drivers and 58 percent of their parents believed that winter was the most dangerous season for teenagers on the road.

Some of the reasons for teenage traffic accidents may also have been brought out by the Ford report: Two-thirds of teen drivers say they are distracted when behind the wheel; 42 percent said they turn up the radio so loud that they can't hear nearby vehicles; and more than half say they listen to an iPod or MP3 player.

The research by State Farm confirmed earlier studies showing that while most teenage drivers are aware that distracted driving is dangerous, many of them engage in the risky behavior. Three-quarters of those contacted by the company said they'd asked a friend to stop texting while behind the wheel. But almost half of them admitted to reading or sending text messages when driving themselves.

More than 90 percent said they used a seat belt, the report said.

Despite common parental laments that their teenagers don't listen to them, State Farm said that two-thirds of teenagers said that the best way to learn driving skills was with their parent in the car. More than half of them said their parents provided driving advice.

AAA found that 980 teen drivers and their passengers died in crashes nationwide between Memorial Day and Labor Day of 2011.

"To keep teens safe during these dangerous months and the rest of the year, parents need to be especially vigilant about communicating with their teens about safety and enforcing household rules about driving," Townsend said.

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Gone are the days that you hire a driver based on the word of a current driver or a friend you met at the club.

Do your homework (due diligence) on the candidate. It can be money well spent.

Drivers are a valuable asset and, like it or not, they must be treated with some TLC.

Do you have any reward programs for your drivers?

- Safe driving award;
- Something in place for drivers that have clean MTO or DOT inspections;
- Driver of the month;
- Company driver appreciation BBQ;
- Tailgate talks for the drivers;

Your rewards do not have to be expensive. It can be a card for the local coffee shop, the neighbourhood supermarket, a favorite hardware store, or local eatery.

I was following a blog on the quality of drivers and came across an interesting comment from a driver.

The comment referred to the fact that a trucking company when purchasing a new truck knows a lot of the details of the truck.

- The top one being MPG.
- Where it will best fit into the fleet.
- What the ROI is and even know when it will be time to deal the truck off.

Then there is the other important asset that the carrier knows very little about and maybe views it as a cost of doing business - the driver.

My point is, listen to the drivers, know what they want, both likes and dislikes. You cannot give them everything but if you talk to them and listen you will form a bond and culture.

Written by Mike Kroetsch of Transportation Safety & Compliance Solutions.

Mike is a 42-year veteran of the truck transportation industry.

New idea for a drivers meeting

Transportation Safety & Compliance Solutions is introducing training for the Fleet Collision Review Committee.

This is an excellent opportunity to update your current collision review committee on the process of reviewing collisions and preventability. If you have been considering a collision review committee for your company this would be a valuable asset to the fleet.

This could also be an opportunity to place a different spin on a defensive driving or driver improvement course for all your drivers.

What the meeting covers:

- Definitions
 - At fault collision
 - Preventable collision
 - Non preventable collision
- Objectives of a collision review committee
- Drivers receive a guide to Preventable Collisions
- Group workshop on collisions

Driver distractions

Spring is a very interesting time of the year. It is the time that you can let the fresh air in and see things that you forgot about from last fall because they have been buried in the snow. The trees are budding, the birds are singing and the flowers are giving nature a beautiful balance of color. Our thoughts go toward, ball games, picnics in the park and trips to the beach in the not too distant summer.

I hope that my literary ability was able to paint some beautiful pictures in your mind. However, what I have done is started to give you a few driving distractions that add to the daily challenges of driving.

Be aware of two main types of distractions - Internal and External:

Internal

Radio
Cell Phone
Climate control
Passengers or Pets
Our thoughts and busy schedules

External

Traffic
Weather
Scenery
Construction Zones
People, pedestrians cyclists

Please do not get caught up as a distracted driver, let the cell phone go to voice mail, if it is an emergency they will call again. Be safe out there for everyone's sake.

By Mike Kroetsch of Transportation Safety & Compliance Solutions