

## Where did the summer go?

That was a quick one for sure. I hope you had a chance to enjoy the summer, have a little R&R and of course spend time with your family and friends.

Yes I did manage all those into my life and enjoyed it. From time to time when I did have a few minutes to sit back and relax my brain started to think about the fall newsletter.

## What challenges do small fleets face?

This conversation with a colleague sparked an interesting subject for the Fall Edition of Safety Lane. I was asked what I see as some of the challenges the smaller fleets are seeing from the perspective of safety and in general operations?

Wow that is a tough one because the way I see it the small fleets for the most part face the same challenges as their competition the big fleets, but small fleets do not always have the tools required to correct the situation.

Here is a list of 5 challenges that I see in no particular order for small fleets

1. Hiring process; the budget and the process for recruiting to placing that driver in the drivers seat. There is simply no budget for hiring and recruiting. I am seeing a trend that more small fleets are doing pre employment in cab evaluations but there are still not enough. Take the time, do one or more interviews. Have a list of questions and involve others to ask questions. The next part is who does the in cab evaluation? In many cases it is the owner or the head mechanic. In those 2 cases I see that they focus on the mechanical aspect and that the driver is not abusing the equipment. Now that is important but a collision can cost more than a clutch. The next choice is a senior driver. In some cases that is a good choice but often times a senior driver is just plain and

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***“A hero is a  
man who does  
what he can”  
Romain Rolland***

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simple old school and they have limited training as a defensive driver.

2. Mentoring the new drivers: The equipment and the product are not cheap but despite that many fleets do the bare bones minimum to assist the new driver to succeed. Often times there are too many assumptions on the competency of a driver. An example is the focus is on the driver and that he/she has 20 years as commercial driver delivering bread to the corner store and that 20 years gives them the skill and ability to do all. Hopefully a carrier would not send them out with a 5 axle trailer of steel without any training? I hate to say it but yes it does happen.

3. Dispatch/Operation/Sales Staff; Often times I will hear from a driver that they are leaving the current job for a new one because of the dispatch.

a. The dispatcher is just making things happen legal or illegal because they want their boss to see that they are an asset to the company and can move lots of loads.

b. The dispatchers often lack people skills or a personality. By talking nice to people you get better results and often times a driver will pull that extra load just because you asked him/her nice. Maybe the driver negotiated a short or special load next time it comes up just as a favour

You ask what does this have to do with safety. I was taught a long time ago that safety is about attitude; maybe today the word is behaviour. Regardless if that conversation with the dispatcher has left the driver distracted it is going to take a lot of miles for the driver to forget about the last dispatch and remain in the right frame of mind (not distracted)

4. The right people in the safety and recruiting department. Depending on the company size safety and recruiting may be in the same department, or part of the operations managers duties. Either way these are important roles and the people responsible for those duties and responsibilities associated with them must be the right fit.

a. They must be able to understand the industry and the life style of the industry.

b. Those people must be people persons able to deal with the different personalities.

c. Have an understanding of the culture and ethnic backgrounds of the candidates applying for a job and of the company's current workforce.

d. Have a solid understanding of company policies and enforcement regulations. If you do not know never guess, admit it and research the answer. The result is 2 parties are more knowledgeable now and likely to share the right information.

e. As an owner or manager of a department ensure that your staff is current on regulation, industry changes and competent. Or have people that know where to obtain the correct info.

This last one really irritates me and I have a story to go with it. I was in a company small safety office and overheard all this as it went down. First off the company was training the driver on an outdated video by about 20 years. That was bad enough but the trainer made sure that the person taking the training knew it was old and some of the information was outdated. The good part was there was a knowledge verification. That looks good in the employee qualification file. The but to this is the driver was handed the knowledge verification when the video started and told that if they follow along they would be able to answer the questions as the video progressed. Hang on the best part is yet to come. The driver finishes and it is time to review the evaluation. The trainer read the questions and the driver was expected to give the answer back. There were some that the driver was not sure of and was upfront about this with the trainer. The trainer reassured the driver not to worry I will help you out. Getting to the point of this story is that both the driver and the trainer did not achieve the company required pass mark on the evaluation. The trainer acknowledged incorrect answers as correct. In my opinion there was no learning from this training.

5. Succession planning; most small trucking companies are family run and have been maybe for 2 & 3 generations. There is nothing wrong with that, however without proper long term planning and training a family member is given the responsibility of running a trucking company that they are not ready for.

I have seen some small family run operations take some major setbacks as a result of an unexpected death of key player in the organization. Information sharing is important and more important with a future company president.

## **Safety Responsibilities**

**Preparation is always the key to success, Leaders, Managers; Supervisors need to gain an understanding of roles and responsibilities of their position.**

### **A DRIVING TREND THAT IS NOT A GOOD ONE!**

This is something that I feel needs some immediate attention from the professional driver and the 4 wheelers.

The problem is merging from a ramp into driving lane. What happened to looking and signalling and looking again when you want to merge or change lanes?



Merging is done when two roadways join into one and the traffic on the main roadway must cooperate to allow enough space for vehicles to enter from the merging lane.

**Neither the merging vehicle nor the vehicles already on the highway have the right-of-way.**

**Merging is a shared responsibility between the vehicles joining the roadway and the vehicles already on the roadway.**

**Avoid reducing your speed abruptly or stopping when merging.**

This merging lane is designed to allow you to bring your vehicle to the posted speed of the road onto which you are merging. The drivers behind you are expecting you to continue moving ahead. If you slow or stop, your vehicle may be hit from behind.

**Here are some tips on merging safely:**

Merging requires that you plan and time your approach to blend smoothly with traffic, without stopping or abruptly reducing your speed.

- Check the traffic flow on the highway as soon as you can see the lane where you will be merging.
- Choose your gap in the traffic, and begin adjusting your speed, if required. Keep glancing at the gap you chose to ensure you are making the speed and timing adjustments necessary to safely merge without affecting traffic.
- Use your signal light before or when you are on the acceleration lane.
- Accelerate to the speed of the traffic on the main road.
- Keep shoulder and mirror checking to view the gap and for vehicles following you.
- When it is safe and legal, move into the gap after you are past the solid white line of the acceleration lane. Maintain your speed at or near the speed of the other vehicles.
  - Ensure your signal light is turned off.
  - **If you are on the main roadway, and traffic is merging, move left to the next lane if it is safe. This leaves the right travel lane clear for the merging vehicles to enter.**

**This information is from the Dept of Transport Alberta.**

*Thinking about a Fall or Winter Drivers Safety Meeting?  
Now is the time to book your meeting.*