

## **National Fleet Safety Programme – New Zealand**

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### **Abstract**

In New Zealand approximately 30% of workplace deaths and 13% of workplace injuries occur on the road, in work vehicles, making them the biggest single category of workplace deaths. A survey in 2009 found that most fleet owners were not meeting their responsibilities under the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act (2002). The survey findings – and the high workplace road risk prompted the development of an interagency Fleet Safety Programme. The programme has been designed to help employers and managers improve their fleet safety by offering information, advice and practical help. The programme is an innovative approach in that it uses traffic infringement, crash and fleet data. Commercial fleets are then ranked according to potential road risk. Injury claim data and employer information are also considered for fleets indicating higher potential risk – to produce a broader understanding of health and safety performance for companies. All fleet owners identified as having medium or high risk fleets receive automated letters inviting them to log on to a Fleet Safety website offering information and resources to enhance safety interventions. Additionally, regional inter-agency teams will visit high risk businesses to offer advice and initiatives to reduce existing risks. Phase 1 of the programme (Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions) will be discussed, including the process evaluation and findings. Experiences of stakeholders will be explored by sharing some case studies.

### **Purpose of paper**

The purpose of this paper is to provide information about the inter-agency Fleet Safety Programme in New Zealand, and discuss some learnings from the programme development.

### **Background**

#### ***The need for the programme***

While most companies know that they are required to provide 'a safe workplace' under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, many do not realize that 'workplace' includes the vehicles used by employees in their work.

In 2010, work related crashes were the single biggest cause of death in the workplace, accounting for almost 30% of all workplace fatalities and 13% of all workplace injuries. The annual social cost of these accidents was estimated at \$3.8billion.

The most common causes of work-related crashes are preventable, and include poorly maintained vehicles, speeding, fatigue and inattention.

Currently there are around 600,000 work vehicles in New Zealand. 18,000 (15%) of these are part of company fleets with more than 5 vehicles.

### ***Building on success***

In 2005, ACC and NZ Police introduced the *Commercial Driver Programme* to reduce the number and intensity of accidents caused by fatigue and involving commercial drivers.

The programme created a joint agency database that enabled the analysis of infringement notices and accident claims by drivers in commercial fleets. This information was presented to employers along with a number of practical resources to prompt improvements in the company's health and safety procedures.

Initially piloted in the Central North Island district, the programme was expanded to include the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington and Eastern districts. It has increasingly been accepted by road transport and logistics organisations, with many using reports from the database as a performance measurement tool for their drivers.

An evaluation conducted by Research New Zealand ([Evaluation of the Commercial Driver Fatigue Programme – a Qualitative Study, 2006; Research New Zealand](#)) identified the benefits to companies, e.g. a reduction in crashes and the risk of employees harming themselves or other road users, improvements in productivity, lower insurance premiums, etc.

The evaluation recommended the extension of the programme to include a focus on the use of restraints, careless and dangerous driving, alcohol and other drug offences.

### **Inter-Agency Fleet Safety Programme**

In 2009, the partnership between ACC and NZ Police was expanded to include NZ Transport Agency and the Department of Labour to enhance the Commercial Driver programme and ensure its relevance to all fleet vehicles.

The new *Fleet Safety Programme* aims to reduce the number, level and impact of accidents involving commercial fleet vehicles by identifying the level of risk they present to their owners, and providing targeted support to improve their fleet management.

A system to identify at-risk fleet operators has been developed by combining traffic infringement, crash and fleet data from NZ Police and NZ Transport Agency. The inclusion of speed camera infringements and pending incidents (not yet confirmed by court decision), have added extra value to the data. This data is considered at a company level, data relating to specific individuals is not considered for privacy reasons.

A numerical *fleet risk level* will be assigned - an algorithm is being developed for this purpose. Companies presenting a medium fleet risk will receive a letter outlining their level of risk and directing them to the fleet safety website ([www.fleetsafety.govt.nz](http://www.fleetsafety.govt.nz)). Highest risk fleet owners may also get a visit from one of the agencies involved in the programme to assist them with risk mitigation.

The fleet risk level of high risk companies is combined with claims data from ACC and information from company health and safety records held by the Department of Labour, to

provide a fuller workplace risk assessment of each company. Representatives from the four partner agencies have bimonthly regional meetings to discuss these. A decision is made as to whether agency intervention is appropriate for these companies, and who the lead agency will be. The lead agency will then organise a visit with the fleet owner/management of these companies and engage them in a safety improvement assistance programme.

All companies invited into the programme, by letter or personal invite, can get their own fleet safety data through the fleet safety website. On the website they can request regular fleet reports and have access to resources to help improve their fleet safety.

### ***Implementing the programme***

The trial of the Fleet Safety Programme commenced in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty Districts on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2012. Comprehensive training and guidance materials for the local inter-agency teams have been developed and delivered, along with a marketing and communications plan.

A process evaluation was to be conducted in August 2012 to inform the national roll out of the programme which was scheduled for September 2012. Unfortunately, the algorithm being used to rank the companies for relative risk, did not deliver a consistent measure of risk. It appeared that there were too many variables within the diverse fleets in the database, and this was confounding the ranking results. Reassessment of the algorithm was required, and this has been contracted to a Specialist Research Engineer in Fleet Safety. Testing will be carried out with the new algorithm when ready – before using the ranking to identify relative risk in companies. Instead – a few company's who had received interventions from the inter-agency regional team during the trial, will be interviewed and case studies written. These will be discussed at the conference.

National rollout of the data can occur, while the algorithm is being reformatted. This will enable companies in New Zealand to have access to reports showing all traffic infringements, and to monitor their fleet safety over time. A crude ranking of fleets by the number of traffic infringements, per vehicle, per fleet will be used until the new algorithm is developed – and this will enable agencies to identify fleets with a higher level of infringements than other companies (as a starting point for a conversation). When the algorithm is producing robust measures of relative risk, regional groups will be brought together, trained, and interventions of the highest risk companies will resume. A full evaluation to determine the impact and outcomes of the programme is planned for early 2014.

### **Results**

We have two case studies of larger fleets, suggesting that the database and website information have been useful in monitoring fleet safety, and informing fleet safety development. The inter-agency interventions were very well received and provided a 'call to action' for both companies.

### **References**

Evaluation of the Commercial Driver Fatigue Programme – a Qualitative Study, 2006;  
Research New Zealand