

Work-related road safety



- In Australia, vehicles are the highest mechanism of injury for workplace fatalities.¹
- Work-related road crashes account for 1 in 3 occupational fatalities in Australia¹ and 15% of the national road toll.²

State of the Road A Fact Sheet of the Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland (CARRS-Q)

THE FACTS

This fact sheet complements CARRS-Q's *OH&S and Construction Safety Fact Sheet*³. The OH&S and Construction Safety Fact Sheet provides further information on occupational health and safety in Australia, and CARRS-Q's work in the broader field.

Work-related road safety

- Work-related road crashes account for 33% of all occupational fatalities in Australia¹ and 15% of the national road toll.²
- Safe Work Australia released a report in 2012¹ on work-related traumatic injury fatalities for the period 2010-2011. During this one year period, of the total 374 work-related fatalities (including commuting fatalities), 220 people were injured at work, 110 travelling to and from work, and 44 were bystanders. In regard to the mechanisms of injury, vehicles are the primary mechanism of injury for work place fatalities, four times higher than any other mechanism of injury which happens to be falls from height.
- The number of reported work-related deaths is typically understated due to the difficulty in accurately cross-matching data sets and identification of all commuting deaths by some states.
- Work-related road crashes incur a greater average time lost in worker absence than any other workplace claim.^{4,5}
- Within work-related driving settings, reversing incidents are the most common types of crashes.^{4,5}
- Based on Australian workers compensation data, work-related road crash injuries are estimated to cost approximately \$500 million per year.⁶

- CARRS-Q research has shown that costs associated with work-related vehicle crashes have more often than not been calculated in terms of vehicle damage or write off costs. These costs however are only the tip of the iceberg. Other costs not usually identified include personal injury, medical/hospital, rehabilitation, absence from work, workers compensation, downtime/lost productivity and potential loss of custom⁶, administration, loss of assets, retraining and insurance premiums⁷. CARRS-Q has undertaken research to identify the true cost of a fleet crash. Results indicated, within a particular fleet, that the average total insurance cost inclusive of property damage, workers compensation and third party costs was \$28,122 per incident.⁸ Actual vehicle crash costs could be somewhere between 8-36 times vehicle repair/replacement costs.⁶

All organisations should have policies which cover the purchase and leasing of safe vehicles, safe driving and workplace practices, and education in road safety.¹³

Legislation

- Within Australia, there are two primary elements of legislation particularly relevant to organisations operating light vehicle fleets. Firstly, there is road safety or transport legislation that governs general road use including driving hours for heavy vehicles as well as vehicle safety and driver

qualification and regulatory frameworks. Secondly, organisations that operate vehicles for work are also governed by Workplace Health and Safety legislation.⁷

- Under Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation in Australia, vehicles used for work purposes are considered as a workplace. Therefore, employers have an obligation (or duty of care) to provide a safe place and a safe system of work. Likewise, employees have an obligation to perform work (including driving) safely and comply with legislation, policies and procedures to minimise safety risks.

Why improve work-related road safety?

- Every worker is entitled to arrive home safe from their work day and every employer is obligated to comply with OH&S legislation.
- Work-related road safety improvements equate to:
 - improved safety for drivers, other workers, road users, and members of the public;
 - improved productivity;
 - increased legislation compliance;
 - reduction in fatalities and injuries;
 - reduction in work absences; and
 - reduction in crash-related costs.

Influences on work-related road safety

How an organisation performs, or is required to perform its operations, may influence work-related driver safety (eg. high mileage travel^{9,10}, time pressures¹¹, and in particular, organisational culture¹²). Other influences may include poor maintenance procedure, poor selection of vehicles for the job, selection and recruitment of drivers and

lack of road safety policy and procedures. These factors may have a direct influence on a work-related road incident. For example, worn tyres that are overlooked due to a poor maintenance program may cause a crash, or time pressure to complete jobs may lead to speed-related crashes.

Current inadequacies

- Many employers, although addressing risks associated with other areas of business operation, fail to appropriately address the high risk associated with work-related driving. Research-based interventions are critical in improving occupational safety outcomes.
- According to the Australasian College of Road Safety, all organisations should have policies which cover the purchase and leasing arrangements of safe vehicles, safe driving and workplace practices and education in road safety.¹³ Furthermore, organisations need to take explicit action to ensure their employees know and practice safe vehicle use.

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE

For work-related drivers

- Knowledge of work-related vehicle/road safety enables drivers to identify potential risks to their own driving safety and change their driving behaviour accordingly.
- Be an alert, safe and courteous driver.
- Allow adequate time to avoid rushing.
- Be aware of traffic and environmental conditions and drive accordingly.
- Report any vehicle-related risks to your employer.

- On long journeys, take a break every two hours.
- Undertake vehicle circle checks or use a passenger as a spotter when reversing.

For organisations operating fleets

Work-related road safety improvements within any organisation can only be achieved through the continued commitment and support of both staff and management. CARRS-Q runs an extensive work-related road safety program tailoring services to meet the unique needs of individual organisations regarding their fleet size, vehicle composition, organisational culture, and budgetary constraints. For more information, visit <http://www.carrsq.qut.edu.au/fleet/resources.jsp> or please contact us.

CARRS-Q'S WORK IN THIS AREA

- **Work-related road safety research**
CARRS-Q is involved in a number of research projects which aim to advance the field of work-related road safety.
- **Customised research and advisory service**
CARRS-Q offers a "one stop shop" service for the fleet safety requirements of local and national organisations ranging in fleet size from 5 to 18,000 vehicles. Our services include fleet safety policy development, crash recording and reporting processes, seminars and educational workshops, driver profiling, fleet bench-marking to evaluate current and future practices, and the development of tailored interventions and evaluations.
- **Road safety awareness program**
Designed to be easily implemented by a company to reach as many staff as

possible to encourage safe driving, the program includes road safety posters, fleet safety fact sheets, work-related road safety hints or tips, computer screen messages and Tool Box Talks covering a range of topics. Visit <http://www.carrsq.qut.edu.au/fleet/resources.jsp> for downloadable resources, or please contact us.

Vehicles used for work purposes are considered 'workplaces'. Safety in and around them, is everyone's legal responsibility.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- An improved policy and monitoring focus is required to ensure organisations discharge their Workplace Health and Safety obligations by managing the risk associated with driving for work. Given that work-related road safety compensation claims make up almost half of all workers compensation claims, organisations need to manage this risk with at least the level of attention and resources that they allocate to other workplace risks.
- A policy shift within fleet organisations is required to encourage the proactive rather than reactive management of work-related road safety risk.
- The use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) to increase work-related road safety.

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STATE OF THE ROAD is CARRS-Q's series of Fact Sheets on a range of road safety and injury prevention issues. They are provided as a community service and feature information drawn from CARRS-Q's research and external sources. See the reference list for content authors.

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