

Preventing Road Accidents involving Heavy Goods Vehicles ⁽¹⁾

Road safety is a priority for the European Union's transport policy. Although it is a shared responsibility between public authorities, enterprises and the general public, enterprises and employees in the transport sector should take a leading role. This factsheet outlines some basic good practice principles for the road transport sector

Successful enterprises incorporate road safety into their quality policy

In the E.U. some 800 lorry drivers are killed each year in road traffic accidents, making this a dangerous occupation ⁽²⁾. All employees, including in road haulage, have a right to safe and healthy work.

Accidents also have an impact on company costs: enterprises that adopt a road safety policy generally reduce their operating costs as a result. Furthermore, road accidents involving heavy goods vehicles are damaging to the image and public acceptance of road haulage.

For all these reasons, a firm commitment from road transport enterprises is needed to reduce the risks to your drivers.

Safety aspects of operations

The European occupational safety and health approach includes assessing risks and implementing preventive measures, giving priority to removing risks at source. These principles should be applied to implementing a preventive plan for road safety and health that includes vehicles and their equipment, operations planning and personnel. Set up a register to enter any incidents. These can be analysed as part of the risk assessment to help determine the best action to take.

The **preventive plan** should include, in particular:

- the appointment of a company safety officer;
- staff consultation and an internal communication system, providing a channel for staff to put forward comments and suggestions;
- specific training for staff, especially drivers;
- arrangements to ensure account is taken of the road safety performance of individual personnel;
- maintenance of lorries and equipment;
- alignment with road traffic legislation and highway codes including requirements relating to tachographs and driving times.

Specific road transport directives and regulations include measures to regulate driving times, recording equipment, vehicle inspection and driving licences.

Safety aspects of business relations

Enterprises can also exploit safety in their business operations, for example:

- ensure that customers are aware of your road safety commitment and encourage them to take a greater interest in road safety. Avoid making any concessions that might adversely affect road safety, such as changes to driving hours and waiting times or agreements to overload your vehicles.
- Include your road safety procedures in other management areas such as quality certification, marketing promotions, and get a commercial benefit from them.

Partnership with local authorities

Transport enterprises can demonstrate their expertise by setting standards for their personnel and encouraging road safety improvements in the local area where their business is based.

Work with your local authority on improvements or adopting a safety plan, which could include a local road safety charter. Take the initiative and point out any problems or possible road safety improvements

Drivers can also use their expert knowledge of the problems and become involved in public work to improve road systems, signs and signals, public information and the education of the young.

EMPLOYERS' GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLIST

- Establish a written safety policy and instructions for your drivers and self employed drivers you hire;
- Provide a seat belt for the driver and each passenger required to travel in the vehicle;
- Purchase vehicles that are equipped with the best safety features including seat belts and air bags, safety screen behind the driver's seat, anti-lock brakes, load safety devices, blind spot elimination equipment, etc;
- Establish procedures to ensure proper maintenance of your vehicles;
- Establish schedules that allow drivers enough time to obey speed limits and avoid peak-hour driving. If speed-limiting devices are fitted, check they are not tampered with;
- Take account of weather and adverse conditions when setting schedules;
- Specify safe routes, preferably motorways;
- Monitor and control driving hours within recommended safe limits and legal requirements;
- Loading can cause fatigue. If possible use trained personnel other than drivers to do the unloading. Plan rest periods for drivers who are required to load and drive;
- Employ suitable drivers. Check their driving licence background. Check they are fit to drive;
- Ensure drivers are trained in safe driving practices, checking vehicle safety, proper use of vehicle safety features, safe loading of vehicles. Plan refresher training and regular briefings;
- Develop clear policies on control of alcohol and other substance abuse;
- Ensure that mobile phones are used appropriately;
- Adopt any local charter and codes for road safety as part of your safety programme. Contribute to their development;
- If you contract owner-drivers you can still specify standards for vehicle maintenance, safety features, seat belt use, training and experience etc. Driving schedules, routes etc. and safety procedures will often be directly or indirectly under your control.

⁽¹⁾ N.B. This factsheet does not cover requirements for carrying dangerous goods

⁽²⁾ CARE European database on road accidents

Heavy goods vehicle drivers are also road safety professionals

Accidents involving heavy goods vehicles can have extremely serious consequences.

As a professional driver, your own safety, and that of other road users, often depends on your attitude and behaviour behind the wheel. You are also obliged to co-operate with your employer on health and safety matters. The long-term objective is to eliminate all sources of serious and fatal accidents on European roads. As a driver, you have an important role to play by acting responsibly.

Responsible sharing of the road network means:

- anticipating possible risk situations to be able to react appropriately;
- being able to react appropriately in hazard situations or when accidents actually occur;
- adopting a non aggressive, cautious style of driving, and treating other road users with courtesy, respect and consideration, even where others are at fault.

Such commitment will help to ensure your own safety and reduce stress and demonstrate your professionalism.



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Considerate and professional driving

Take account of safety even when planning your run. Whenever possible, use the least tiring and least dangerous routes, preferably motorways.

When you cannot avoid passing through heavy traffic areas, try to avoid peak-hour driving by timing your breaks and rest periods appropriately.

Keep a safe distance behind the vehicle in front. Adjust your speed as necessary to allow for the type of road, traffic density, visibility and weather conditions.

On motorways, always signal any change of lane in advance, to avoid taking drivers behind you by surprise. If traffic is light and you intend to embark on a long overtaking manoeuvre, try not to obstruct drivers coming up behind you by waiting to overtake if necessary.

On minor roads, allow car drivers to pass you if significant tailbacks have formed.

Be alert to the most vulnerable road users, especially in built-up areas: cyclists, pedestrians, children and the elderly.

DRIVERS' GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLIST

- Follow safety instructions;
- Use seat belts at all times. Other workers should only be carried if there is a seat belt for each person; Always drive within the speed limit. Reduce your speed to take account of weather conditions;
- Do not continue driving if tired. Take regular breaks. Get out of the cab and take some fresh air. Do not use stimulants to overcome tiredness;
- Always comply with local traffic conditions and follow requirements on driving time;
- Adjust your seating position so it is as upright as possible and so that you are using the head restraint. This will help to prevent whiplash in the event of an accident;
- Be familiar with the maintenance procedures for your vehicle and ensure it is kept in good running order. Are windows and mirrors clean? Are tyres, brakes, steering and lights in good condition?
- Do not drive under the effect of alcohol or drugs or if you have taken any medicines that could affect your driving. Follow the safety instructions for medicines and consult your doctor if in doubt;
- Be aware that smoking while driving can cause drowsiness from carbon dioxide displacing oxygen in the cab and increased carbon monoxide in the driver's blood;
- Do not use LPG or carbon fuelled heaters or cookers in the cab as carbon monoxide can build up and cause death;
- Use safe practices to climb down from the cab, especially as visibility may be poor or your leg muscles tired;
- Make sure your load is evenly distributed and properly secured. Ensure safe working with the load itself, e.g. to prevent the risk of the load falling on you;
- Make sure that there are no loose objects in the cab that could fly about on braking and cause injury;
- Co-drivers resting in bunks should be strapped in;
- Ensure vision is not obstructed by pendants or stickers etc. on windows;
- Try to avoid parking your vehicle or trailer in positions that will obstruct traffic or visibility of other drivers or pedestrians. Ensure measures to prevent the vehicle moving are applied;
- Eat regular, healthy meals.

Getting further information:

- Agency website <http://osha.eu.int>. The Agency site is linked to Member State sites where you may find national occupational health and safety legislation, codes and guidelines.
- European Regulations and Directives can be found at the Eurolex database <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/>. Directives are not directly applicable. They are implemented in the legislation of each Member State and enforced according to their legal system. Where Directives set minimum standards Member States may have additional requirements. Many produce supporting guidelines and codes of practice.
- EU Commission Directorate General of Energy and Transport http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/index_en.html