

DISTRACTION

NRSP Heavy Vehicles Toolbox Talk
Team Leader | Manager | Facilitator Package

ToolboxTalks

A partnership between:



This Toolbox Talk Package is designed to provide Team Leaders/Managers and Facilitators with the required resources and information to conduct a tool box safety talk about the risks of distraction when driving to a group of employees within the organisation.

The Package Contains:

- A generic overview of Toolbox Talk Discussion and how it can be applied to work driving safety, including a step by step process to assist team leaders/managers and facilitators to lead a Toolbox Talk discussion
- Aid for the promotion of discussion
- Topic background information and fact sheet
- Discussion prompt sheet
- Participant attendance record sheet
- Participant self-assessment sheet
- Discussion review sheet
- Distraction risks when driving poster
- Supporting PowerPoint Slides
- Distraction risks when driving video

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OVERVIEW OF TOOLBOX TALK DISCUSSION KIT

as a Work Safety Driving Intervention

Introduction

Toolbox Talks have been utilised as a means to communicate information and knowledge and/or discuss occupational health and safety or operational issues within a workplace. Consequently, Toolbox Talks are an ideal broad-based intervention strategy that can be used to highlight issues associated with work driving safety. Previous research conducted with Swedish Televerket (Telecom) company demonstrated the effectiveness of group discussion in comparison to a suite of intervention strategies designed to reduce crash involvement. Results indicated that group discussion contributed to the highest reduction in crashes and was also the most cost-effective intervention to implement (Gregersen et al 1996).

Toolbox Talks are a simple and cost-effective method that not only provides knowledge regarding work-related driving safety, but in addition promotes discussion and awareness of work-related driving safety specifically relevant to the organisation. They typically are kept to a small and manageable timeframe 15–20 minutes and are designed to convey important information and actively promote further discussion. Longer timeframes may be allocated dependant on time and resources provided by the organisation.

Aim

The aim of the “Fleet Safety Toolbox Talk Discussion Kit” is to convey information regarding typical aspects detrimental to work-related driving safety. In addition, as part of a group discuss these issues with regards to how the issues may impact on your specific organisation and also to your employees. Discussion concerning relevant and current issues influencing work-related driving promotes a more knowledgeable workforce regarding both positive and negative issues and effects in reference to work-related driving within the organisation. This proactive intervention aims to ultimately provide the impetus for individual behavioural change with assistance from peer involvement and support.

Reference

Gregersen, N.P., Brehmer, B. & Moren, B. (1996). Road safety improvement in large companies. An experimental comparison of different measures, *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 28, 297-306.

OVERVIEW OF TOOLBOX TALK DISCUSSION KIT

as a Work Safety Driving Intervention

Resources/Kit Contents Explanation

Within the Toolbox Talk kit there are 6 simple steps to aid in planning, conducting and reviewing of issues relevant to work driving safety Toolbox Talks. Each of the 6 steps are outlined below:

Step One – Aid for the Promotion of Discussion

This has been included as a guide to assist the Team Leader/ Supervisor/Manager as the facilitator. Step 1 aims to provide the basic information to promote discussion within a small group, how to keep the discussion going and ways of dealing with introvert and extrovert participants. Please read the contents of Step 1 completely before moving on to Step 2.

Step Two – Topic Background Information/Fact Sheets

Step 2 provides the Toolbox Talk facilitator (e.g. Team Leader/ Supervisor/Manager) with background information and recent research with regards to each topic area. Each topic background information sheet(s) should be thoroughly read before conduction of each Toolbox Talk discussion topic.

Step Three – Toolbox Talk Discussion Prompts

Step 3 includes for each topic a set of bulleted points containing the main points for each topic. It assists the Team Leader/Supervisor/ Manager as the facilitator by providing concise information to guide the discussion by providing points to prompt further discussion.

Step Four – Topic/Participant Attendance Information

Work-related driving safety is part of Occupational Health and Safety and as such is governed by Occupational Health and Safety legislation. Part of legislation is to provide training/communicate knowledge of safety issues to staff. This kit contains a participant attendance sheet to be copied, completed and filed with relevant Occupational Health and Safety records within your organisation

Step Five – Participant Self Assessment

The Participant Self-Assessment aim is to encourage participants to reflect on the topical issues discussed at the Toolbox Talks with their own driving safety. The assessment is not designed to be mandatory; however, Team Leaders/Supervisors, etc. should encourage participants to complete the questions, at a time convenient to them after the Toolbox Talk. The Participant Self-Assessment sheet provided should be photocopied and handed to participants at the end of the discussion.

Step Six – Toolbox Talk Discussion Review

Step 6 for each topic is a review sheet which is provided with the kit. This is to be completed prior to the conduction of the next fleet safety Tool Box discussion topic. Facilitators should aim to use the sheet to ask what the participants remember from the last Toolbox Talk instead of reading the list.

STEP 1

Aid for Promotion of Discussion

The following information is provided as Step 1 of the Toolbox Talk and is designed to assist Team Leaders/Supervisors/ Managers in leading a Toolbox Talk Discussion.

A typical discussion group session consists of a small number of participants under the guidance of their Team Leader/Supervisor/ Manager who will be responsible for leading and facilitating the discussion groups. The informal group discussion atmosphere is intended to encourage team members to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes, and opinions they possess. The role of the Team Leader/Supervisor/Manager facilitating the Toolbox Talk is to create an environment for constructive and cooperative interaction. Below are seven top tips to assist the Team Leader/ Supervisor/Manager to lead and facilitate a successful Toolbox Talk.

1. Clearly defined objective and discussion topic

Before conduction of the Toolbox Talk discussion, participants should be made aware of the purpose or objectives of the Toolbox Talk discussion, the topic or title for discussion, and any time limits.

2. The nature of the group

The recommended size of focus groups is between 5 and 10 participants. The concise sessions are designed to be approximately 15-20 minutes in duration.

3. Atmosphere/environment and rapport

The atmosphere/environment should be conducive to discussion group member participation. For example, the atmosphere should be informal and participants encouraged to relax, to participate and contribute their opinions and ideas without fear of any organisational disciplinary action. Toolbox Talk discussions should be conducted in an environment with minimal distractions and free of interruptions. Mobile phones should be switched off for the duration of the Toolbox Talk discussion.

4. An aware listening facilitator

The facilitator should be an active listener and flexible in the management of the Toolbox Talk discussion groups. The facilitator should support participants in developing their own solutions rather than prescribing solutions for them.

5. A well organised and prepared facilitator

The Toolbox Talk discussions are designed to be short informative sessions where participants can discuss their perceptions and thoughts regarding a particular fleet safety topic. As such, the facilitator is required to be well organised and prepared. For example, the facilitator should be conversant with the information provided in the "Toolbox Talk Discussion Fact Sheets" and prepared to use and promote discussion using the "Toolbox Talk Discussion Prompt Sheets" which are relevant to each topic.

6. Structure and direction, but restrained contribution to the discussion

The facilitator should remain neutral and ensure the fluent discussion by prompting others to discuss their ideas and suggestions. In addition, the facilitator should maintain a balanced flow of ideas among the participants, focussed on the topic at hand and not let a few participants dominate the discussion.

7. Ethical/Privacy Considerations

Confidentiality of discussions should be maintained. Participants should be reminded that discussions or opinions raised will be dealt with in a confidential manner and that they abide by this rule. If confidentiality is breached participants may not be conducive in sharing their opinions and suggestions at future Tool Box Talk discussions.

STEP 1

Aid for Promotion of Discussion

Problems Facilitators May Encounter

The following common issues/problems are included to aid the facilitator in maintaining fluency of the Toolbox Talk discussions:

Quiet/Shy Participant

A group member is not participating as the facilitator thinks they should. This may be because the participant is:

- shy, timid or insecure
- indifferent to the topic being discussed
- bored
- feeling superior
- distracted by pressing issues outside the discussion group
- having trouble understanding the topic under discussion.

Possible Solutions:

- make eye contact with the participant and ask a simple question
- involve the participant more in the discussion
- recognise his/her contribution immediately, sincerely and encourage more
- suggest that everyone takes a turn in sharing their opinion
- ask after the discussion, in private about why the participant was quiet.

Overly Talkative Participant

A participant talks too much, rambles on repeatedly and is generally dominant. This may be caused by:

- a natural need for attention
- being overly prepared/unprepared for the discussion
- wanting to flaunt a large vocabulary or extensive knowledge
- having the most authority.

Possible Solutions:

- glance at your watch whilst the participant is speaking
- during a pause for breath, thank the participant for their comments, and restate the agenda
- emphasising relevant points and time limits
- ask the participant to explain how their comments adds value to the topic in hand
- reflect their comments back to the group
- remind everyone of the time limit.

Side Conversation

A participant is disrupting the discussion by being involved in too many side conversations. This may be because the participant:

- feels the need to introduce an item not relevant to the discussion
- is bored with the discussion
- has a point to raise that they feel makes other items in the discussion less important
- is discussing a related topic but not being heard
- wants to be the centre for attention.

Possible Solutions:

- ask the participant by name if they would like to share their idea with the group
- restate a recently made point and ask for the participant's opinion.

Overly Disagreeable Participant

A participant is highly argumentative or generally antagonistic. This may be because they:

- have a combative personality
- are upset by others opinions or a specific discussion issue
- are a show-off by nature
- are unable to make suggestions constructively
- feel that they are being ignored
- have other personal or job-related issues/problems.

Possible Solutions:

- paraphrase the participant's comments, and after their response, recap his/her position in objective terms
- find merit in the participant's suggestions, express agreement, then move on
- respond to the participant's comments, not the attack
- open the discussion of the participant's comments to the group
- mention that, due to time restraints, the comments can be further discussed later.

STEP 1

Aid for Promotion of Discussion

Encouraging Participation in the Toolbox Talk Discussions

The following statements have been highlighted as methods for encouraging participation: Review the discussion topic and objective at the start of the session to orient participants to the nature of the discussion.

Establish a ground rule at the start of the session that everyone participates – that it's important to hear:

- Everyone's ideas and opinions.
- Don't offer opinions yourself; instead draw out participants' ideas and thoughts.
- Invite participants who are not contributing for their thoughts or opinions (e.g. Joe, what do you think about this?).
- Acknowledge contributions by thanking the person or by indicating in other ways that the contribution is helpful (e.g. "Very interesting..." or "That should improve the ..." or "That's a new way of looking at the problem").
- Encourage people to generate new ideas or approaches.
- Accept opposing points of view.

Conclusion

Some basic points for the facilitator to remember:

- The facilitator leads discussion but does not dominate.
- The facilitator is knowledgeable enough about a topic to be able to provide guiding questions (e.g. Toolbox Talk Discussion Fact Sheets).
- The facilitator is not an answer provider, but rather a tour guide who brings the group to find the answer themselves.
- The facilitator promotes the concept of "safe space". Opinions, particularly based on more sensitive topics should be kept confidential. It is important to remember that opinions are not right or wrong. The facilitator may find that she/he needs to assist group participants in determining their opinions. With this in mind, probing questions become more important.
- It is vital that you have some probing questions ready in the case that the participants are less than vocal. Asking participants questions may get their thoughts going more around the topic. Arriving at the Toolbox Talk Discussion session with prompting questions can be helpful in making sure that discussion happens (e.g. Toolbox Talk Discussion Prompt Sheets).

STEP 2

Fact Sheet

This section (Step 2) includes a copy of a fact sheet which outlines key facts relating to distraction risks when driving. The fact sheet can be copied and distributed to team members participating in the Toolbox Talk.

Driver distraction can be defined as something that can occur in situations where the driver allocates resources to a non-safety critical activity. It has been classified as vehicle-external or vehicle-internal distraction^{8,3}.

Potential Hazards

Heavy vehicle (HV) driving is in nature a solitary activity, with drivers often experiencing loneliness, boredom, and declining vigilance, leading them to engage in secondary tasks^{3,7}. This can represent a high-risk situation. Studies show that secondary tasks that demand the driver's visual attention for more than two seconds increase crash risk three-fold^{2,3}.

According to the generating source, distraction-related factors are usually categorized into five groups: mobile phone, mind wandering, passenger, outside events, and in-vehicle activities⁹. Mind wandering, whether it is daydreaming, future event anticipation, or rumination on a stressful issue, leads to reduced alertness and less attentive driving^{5,6}. In-vehicle distraction has been shown to represent a specific risk for professional drivers, with an estimated 10-30% influence on collisions⁴.

Before and after the journey

Management of queuing and waiting for loading/unloading has been proven to influence the fatigue risk for HV drivers, especially if it extends work hours or alters drivers' rest periods¹². It is also well known that HV drivers may face unexpected situations and constraints when loading or unloading, which may lead to last-minute decisions and risks^{10,11}. Additionally, the interruption or alteration of loading/unloading operations can increase their complexity, making drivers face more constraints¹⁰.

During the journey

The frequency and duration of simple tasks, represent a high risk when combined. The associated cognitive and visual demand of performing them have been found to contribute to critical situations (crashes and near-crashes). Also, studies show that a task not requiring visual attention does not mean drivers will not look away from the roadway when performing them⁷.

Day-dreaming or boredom are common among HV drivers, and the engagement in secondary activities is usually used as a strategy to stay awake and remain vigilant. Nonetheless, these in turn result in distraction³.

To minimise high-risk situations

Know yourself

- Identify what time of the day your body gets distracted more easily.
- Know how your body reacts to different types of food. Do some make you tired?
- Be mindful about high-stress issues that may be distracting you (daydreaming, ruminating, mind wandering).
- Ask yourself: how well did I sleep last night? How alert am I today for the job?

Know your vehicle

- It is your workplace. Keep it organised and without distracting elements. Get familiar with the dashboard and identify the available functions.
- Be aware of the dimensions and limitations (e.g. blind spots) of the vehicle you are driving.

Know your route

- Before starting the journey, double-check directions, weather and traffic conditions.
- Identify areas where you could safely stop and take a break, stretch and reenergise, if required.
- Review how to respond in unexpected situations. Even if the situation cannot be defined, a general protocol can be put in place.

Safety Culture

- Make sure safety is experienced at all levels and the organisational structure is positively shaping everyone's attitude towards safety.
- Take advantage of the camaraderie among workers to know their distraction-related experiences and strategies, and work together to keep safety as the priority¹⁹.

STEP 3

Discussion Prompt Sheet

Step 3 of the Toolbox Talk package includes a discussion prompt sheet which includes a set of bulleted points containing the main or focal points for the topic. It is designed to assist the Team Leader/ Supervisor/Manager lead and facilitate a Toolbox Talk by providing concise information to guide the discussion. The discussion prompt sheet also contains examples of questions to prompt further discussion if required, as well as a “Setting the Scene” paragraph which can be used by the facilitator to highlight the importance of the topic for participants.

Discussion should not be restricted to the information included within the prompt sheet. If you run out of time, don't worry, just review the main points within the prompt sheet that were not discussed. This will ensure participants are familiar with the major issues related to the risks of distraction when driving.

Setting the scene

To manage the risks distraction poses on driving it is important to know how it affects the human mind, when it is more common, and how to prepare. “Driver distraction occurs when inattention leads to a delay in recognition of information necessary to accomplish the driving task”¹. Studies show that secondary tasks that demand the driver's visual attention for more than two seconds increase crash risk three-fold^{2,3}.

Heavy vehicle (HV) driving is in nature a solitary activity, with drivers often experiencing loneliness, boredom, and declining vigilance, leading them to engage in secondary tasks^{3,7}. Also, a task not requiring visual attention does not mean drivers will not look away from the roadway when performing them⁷.

Question 1. What type of distractions am I more vulnerable to?

Answers could include: daydreaming, ruminating or constantly re-visiting recent stressful events; talking on the phone; manipulating additional devices, like GPS or mobile phone; eating and drinking; looking for small objects on top of the dashboard; signs, advertisement and out-vehicle events.

Question 2. How do I usually respond to distractions?

Answers could include: I am always listening to the radio, either upbeat music or talk-shows; I often engage in simple secondary tasks, such as eating while driving; I am constantly daydreaming/ ruminating while on the road; I call someone, but only when I feel the need to fight boredom; I avoid secondary activities that would demand my attention for extended periods of time.

Question 3. How am I prepared to counteract distractions?

Answers could include: when driving for long periods of time, I identify the locations where I can take breaks to let my eyes rest; I know what type of food and exercises can reenergise me, and I avoid those that make me tired or sleepy; I keep the inside of the vehicle clean and organised; I check with myself before and during long journeys to make sure I am vigilant while driving.

Participant Attendance Sheet

Topic Title: Distraction risks when driving.....

Location of Discussion Group:

.....

Date of Discussion Group:

Organisation/Business Group:

.....

Time:

Team Leader/Manager/Facilitator:

.....

[illegible]

STEP 5

Participant Self-Assessment

The following information forms the basis of a step 5 a self-assessment for Toolbox Talk participants. Please complete this short self-assessment by circling your response to the questions below.

Question 1. How often do you find yourself daydreaming, ruminating or mind-wandering?

- 0 Never
- 1 A few times a month
- 2 Once a week
- 3 A few times a week
- 4 Every day or almost every day I drive

Question 2. How often do you engage in secondary activities while driving?

- 0 Never
- 1 A few times a month
- 2 Once a week
- 3 A few times a week
- 4 Every day or almost every day I drive

Question 3. How often do you feel 'in a rush' while driving?

- 0 Never
- 1 A few times a month
- 2 Once a week
- 3 A few times a week
- 4 Every day or almost every day I drive

Question 4. How often do you start your journey without having planned the trip, identified safe stop locations, nor checked conditions at the time, like weather warnings?

- 0 Never
- 1 A few times a month
- 2 Once a week
- 3 A few times a week
- 4 Every day or almost every day I drive

Are You an at Risk Driver?

LOW- MODERATE	An individual score of 0-2 on any question
HIGH	An individual score of 3 on any question
SERIOUS	An individual score of 4 on any question

There are always potential risks and consequences associated with driving. However, these risks can be heightened during longer journeys.

If you scored 3 on any individual question in this section it means that your recent driving behaviours may have been dangerous to yourself and others. The best predictor of unsafe driving behaviour in the future is how you have recently been driving and the outcomes of this driving behaviour. If you scored 4 on any question your driving habits require attention and you need to act now to adopt some of the strategies outlined to prevent serious road injuries and fatalities. Many people do successfully change their driving behaviour and drive much safer than they did in the past and we would encourage you to adopt some safer driving strategies.

STEP 6

Discussion Review

The final step (step 6) in the Distraction Risks When Driving Toolbox Talk process is for the Team Leader/Manager/Facilitator to conduct a quick review of the key points and learnings. The discussion review section below includes a summary of the key points to improve driving safety when driving with the new conditions.

The discussion review can be undertaken at the end of the Toolbox Talk or alternatively, it provides an opportunity to reiterate the key issues at the beginning of the next Toolbox Talk topic session. Therefore, please take 5 minutes to review the Distraction Risks When Driving topic before conducting the next Toolbox Talk topic. Team Leaders/Managers/Facilitators should aim to use the sheet to ask what the participants remember from the last Toolbox Talk instead of just reading the list.

Key Points

- Driver distraction occurs when inattention causes a delay in recognition of necessary information while driving¹.
- Secondary tasks that demand visual attention for more than two seconds increase crash risk three-fold^{2,3}.
- The visual and mental demand of simple tasks have been found to contribute critical situations and increase the risk of making a mistake. Their frequency and duration represent a high risk when combined⁷.
- In-vehicle distraction represents a specific risk for professional drivers, with a 10-30% influence on collisions⁴.
- Knowing how you respond to distractions, can lower the related risks. The recommendations to address its impact when driving include:
 - **Know yourself:** what type of physical activity to do enjoy the most for short-breaks? (i.e. yoga, stretching), what type of music improves your concentration, without altering your mood? (i.e. instrumental, electronic), what do you get most often distracted by? (i.e. day dreaming, talk shows), what are the usual secondary tasks you engage in when countering drowsiness/boredom? Are they benefiting you? Every time you are about to start a new journey, ask yourself: how alert am I today for the job/task? How well did I sleep (last night and last week)? Is there a big issue distracting my thoughts/focus?
 - **Know your route (environment):** double-check directions, weather and traffic conditions before the start of the journey. Identify areas where you could safely stop and take a break if required.
 - **Know your vehicle (work space):** reduce complexity, options, visual and information clutter/overload.
 - **Safety culture:** Foresee and plan how to respond in unexpected situations. Even if the situation cannot be defined, a general protocol can be put in place.

Make sure your vehicles and practices comply with the Heavy Vehicle National Law and the regulations that apply for each state or territory you operate in and drive through. Please reference Chapter 1a – Safety duties.

Additionally, please check the Master Industry Code of Practice Chapter 8 – Vehicle Standards – Risk Types and Suggested Controls.