A handbook for workplaces

Guide to safe work related driving

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The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) has joined with WorkSafe Victoria to prepare guidance that will assist in reducing deaths and injuries resulting from work related driving.

The Victorian Parliamentary Road Safety Committee's Inquiry into Driver Distraction (2006) provided two key recommendations:

• that an occupational health and safety (OHS) approach be applied to eliminating and minimising risks associated with distractions encountered in work related driving
• State Government agencies take the lead in implementing work related driving safety policies to reduce risks in government fleet operations.

In response to these recommendations, the TAC and WorkSafe Victoria have joined forces to address occupational road safety. This guide will help employers with light fleet vehicles to improve their work related driving safety.

The TAC and WorkSafe acknowledge the input made by the following organisations to the development of the guide:

• VicRoads
• Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV)
• Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC)
• Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC).
This guide aims to provide practical advice to employers, fleet managers and drivers on measures to reduce risks associated with work related driving.

The advice is presented in the context of the vehicle as a workplace and thus covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act) and associated regulations. Consequently, employers are responsible not only for ensuring the safety of employees who drive for them, but also for the general public, including other drivers and pedestrians.

For the purposes of this guide, light vehicles are passenger vehicles used in fleets, as well as 4WDs, utilities and small vans.

Many of the risk factors addressed in this guide apply to all commercial vehicles, and to that extent, this guide may have broader application.

Focus in this guide is on vehicle selection and planning the driving task to eliminate or reduce risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

This guide deals with work related driving in a business sequence, beginning with planning before commencing the driving task, through to on road risk management, and monitoring and review of fleet performance.

This guide is premised on good OHS practice and provides information on how to develop work-related driving safety policies. All Victorian workplaces where driving is a requirement of the job should aim to progressively develop and implement policies and practices based on these guidelines as soon as practicable.
Introduction

Work related driving in Australia is a major risk exposure for employers

About 30% of all vehicles registered in Australia are used for business purposes and over 50% of all new vehicles are purchased initially for commercial use.\(^1\)

The level of exposure to risk can be illustrated by research showing that about a third of all travel is work related and that fleet vehicles travel about three times the distance of the average private car.\(^2\)

Research shows that fleet vehicles have a higher rate of involvement in crashes per 10,000 registered vehicles per year than non-fleet vehicles.\(^3\)

This is supportive of other research showing that fleet driving represents an increased crash risk relative to non-fleet driving.

Data from the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) indicates that vehicle accidents represent 41% of all compensated work fatalities. These figures include all vehicles, but highlight the significance of work related driving as a safety issue.

The ASCC report states that of the fatalities related to road transport, 37% were cars, station wagons, utilities and vans.

Given this high risk profile, the benefits of a work related driving safety program can be significant and may include:

- reduced death and injury and all their related personal, social and economic costs
- greater productivity through increases in vehicle use
- greater ability to manage the fleet safely by using fleet safety and incident information.


\(^{2}\) Ibid, p4.

\(^{3}\) Mark Symmons and Narelle Haworth. Safety attitudes and behaviours in work-related driving – Stage 1: Analyses of crash data, Monash University Accident Research Centre, Report number 232, 2005.

Vehicle and driver safety is covered by both OHS legislation and road traffic laws

This guide concentrates on the OHS obligations of employers in providing and maintaining a safe workplace. A workplace includes a passenger vehicle used for work related purposes.

Under Section 21 of the OHS Act, an employer has a duty or responsibility to provide and maintain so far as is reasonably practicable a safe and healthy working environment for its employees.

Determining what is reasonably practicable to protect people from harm involves weighing up all the following matters and making an informed judgement about what is reasonable in the circumstances:

• understanding the hazards and risks:
  – what are the potential hazards
  – what is the likelihood of exposure to these hazards
  – does exposure to the hazards lead to a risk of incident/injury
  – what is the degree of resultant harm

• what the duty-holder knows or reasonably ought to know (the 'state of knowledge') about the hazard, potential exposure and subsequent risk, and any ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk

• the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk

• the costs involved in eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk.

Applied to work related driving safety this would include:

• information about safety features of vehicles and instruction on how to use them

• knowledge about the causes and effects of fatigue

• information about the safe use of the vehicle

• information about safe maintenance of the vehicle.
The specific requirements of the road safety laws also have to be met and they cover matters such as vehicle roadworthiness, driver licensing and road rules (e.g., speed limits). These requirements would be supported in an employer’s OHS program by:

- purchasing and maintaining a safe and roadworthy fleet
- ensuring employees have the relevant appropriate driver licences
- scheduling work to account for speed limits and managing fatigue
- providing appropriate information and training on work-related driving safety
- monitoring and supervision of the work-related driving safety program.

An employer’s duties also extend to an independent contractor engaged by the employer and any employees of the contractor. This duty is limited by the extent of control the employer has over the contractor’s activities.

**While employers have a duty of care, so do employees**

The duty is narrower, but requires that employees take reasonable care and not put themselves or others at risk by their actions or omissions.

Under Section 25 of the OHS Act, employees also have a duty to cooperate with the measures that an employer has developed to eliminate or reduce risks. Applied to work-related driving, the employee duties would include:

- holding a current, valid driver’s licence
- abiding by all road rules (e.g., speed limits)
- refraining from driving if impaired by tiredness or medication
- reporting any incidents required by the employer’s program
- carrying out any routine vehicle checks required by the employer.

As with employers, employees have to comply with the relevant road safety laws. For a driver, this would include a responsibility to drive within speed limits, to comply with drug and alcohol laws and to use seatbelts.

Both employers and employees have duties to each other and to others who might be affected by the work they undertake. In the case of work-related driving, this includes other road users, passengers and people at locations where the driver stops to carry out work.
## OHS responsibilities for work related driving safety

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<th>Responsible person</th>
<th>OHS duty</th>
<th>Driver/Vehicle safety example</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employer</strong> (Undertaken as part of OHS programs and may involve fleet and line managers in larger organisations.)</td>
<td>To consult with employees. To train, supervise and instruct. To meet statutory reporting and recording requirements. To maintain a safe working environment.</td>
<td>✓ Discuss safety selection criteria for new vehicle purchases. ✓ Consult with employees on driver safety procedures. ✓ Provide relevant driver induction and training, including tasks in and around the vehicle. ✓ Record and report work related driving incidents. ✓ Ensure vehicles are well maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contractor</strong> (Has all the same duties as an employer when employing others.)</td>
<td>All the same duties as listed above for an employer. Not to expose others to risks from the work undertaken by the contractor.</td>
<td>✓ Have driver safety and vehicle safety procedures related to contractor’s employees. ✓ Follow any procedures provided by the principal contractor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee (driver)</strong></td>
<td>Not to put self or others at risk. To cooperate with the employer’s policies and procedures to make the workplace safe. To use the vehicle and related equipment in a safe and proper manner.</td>
<td>✓ Comply with road safety laws, such as speed limits, drug and alcohol prohibitions, mobile phone use and seat belt use. ✓ Follow driver safety procedures. ✓ Report incidents. ✓ Report vehicle defects.</td>
</tr>
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Risk management and fleet management

Fleet management is more than purchasing and maintaining vehicles at the lowest cost to the organisation.

Fleet management, whether in small or large organisations has to achieve objectives such as:

- providing fit-for-purpose vehicles
- providing best value vehicles
- maintaining the fleet
- minimising costs related to injury and assets
- minimising insurance costs.

Importantly, fleets need to look at issues such as the sustainability and safety of their fleet.

In some organisations, fleet management may operate as a separate group with a focus on efficient management of vehicles. However, many organisations have moved to integrate fleet management with their OHS program.

**Sample work related driving safety program**

The features of a program that illustrates the fit with OHS principles include:

- a purchasing policy based on a minimum of a four star safety rating in the Australasian New Car Assessment Program
- involvement of employees and local management
- driver information and education
- an appropriate vehicle inspection and maintenance program
- an incident and accident follow-up action plan.

The objectives of a fleet management program are consistent with the conventional risk management approach used in OHS.
Step 1
The first step is to identify hazards.
In the fleet management context, hazards include:
- poor scheduling of trips
- not wearing a seatbelt
- travelling over the speed limit
- inappropriate or unsafe use of vehicles
- insufficiently safe vehicles
- poorly maintained vehicles
- untrained drivers.

Step 2
Where such hazards are identified, a risk assessment can be used to establish how big a problem they represent.
In other words, how likely are these hazards to result in incidents that could injure drivers or others, and how severe might the consequences be. In this risk assessment, known risk factors, such as speeding, fatigue and distractions, must be considered.

Step 3
The risk assessment should identify what risk factors have to be managed to eliminate or minimise the risk of crashes or related incidents.
The most effective controls are those that engineer out risks, so vehicle selection and performance on crash rating tests are critical. Typical risk controls include:
- safe vehicle purchasing policies
- trip planning
- safe driving policies
- maintenance procedures.

Step 4
Monitoring and review of fleet safety is the final part of the risk management loop.
This includes inspections and regular maintenance, as well as responding to driver feedback. Each of these steps should be done with the involvement of employees.
Work related driving is potentially a high risk activity and this guide aims to provide guidance on how to manage these risks. The guide applies to all fleets, large and small, and the relevance of the advice will depend on where your organisation is placed currently.

The chart below is a way of quickly seeing whether your workplace already has an effective program in place (in the green zone), has made some steps (in the amber zone) or needs to take action to reduce risks (get out of the red zone).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Higher risk</th>
<th>Reduced risk solution</th>
<th>Preferred solution</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>There is no assessment of the safest vehicles at the time of purchase.</td>
<td>Standard safety features are included in the purchasing decision.</td>
<td>Vehicles are chosen against criteria covering active and passive safety features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is not scheduled to reduce driving risks.</td>
<td>Drivers are able to reschedule trip times when faced with changing conditions.</td>
<td>Safest routes, adequate time and non-driving alternatives are routinely considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no consultation with employees about driver and vehicle safety.</td>
<td>Consultation about driver and vehicle safety only on a reactive basis.</td>
<td>There is consultation with employees and their representatives through committees and work groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no driver and vehicle safety policies and procedures.</td>
<td>There is a safe driving policy.</td>
<td>There is a safe driving and vehicle selection policy signed off by employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet management is not part of the OHS program.</td>
<td>Driver safety is only considered as part of other high risk work.</td>
<td>Driver and vehicle safety is included as part of the OHS program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers are not given induction training in driver safety.</td>
<td>A brief verbal handover is conducted for new staff.</td>
<td>All new staff required to drive undertake an induction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles are not subject to any regular checks.</td>
<td>Vehicle checks done by depot staff only.</td>
<td>Regular vehicle checks undertaken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is not provided to employees about driving hazards.</td>
<td>Drivers are provided with basic vehicle operating information.</td>
<td>Drivers are provided with information about hazards, such as adverse conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities for work related driving safety are neither allocated nor understood.</td>
<td>Supervisor level and driver responsibilities are defined.</td>
<td>Senior management/owner responsibilities are defined along with everyone involved in the driving task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no basic vehicle maintenance program.</td>
<td>The manufacturer’s service requirements are partly followed.</td>
<td>All vehicles are maintained to manufacturer’s service requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no emergency procedures for incidents on the road.</td>
<td>Drivers rely on standard 000 emergency numbers.</td>
<td>All vehicles have first aid kits, fire extinguishers and emergency contact numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no monitoring of injury or crash data.</td>
<td>Only records of major damage incidents are kept.</td>
<td>Records of fleet and driver experience are kept and used to improve performance.</td>
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In the next three sections, measures to manage work related driving risks are presented in the following order:

- Measures to reduce risks at the planning stage or prior to commencement of driving.
- Measures to manage risk factors in the driving task.
- Measures to manage incidents and monitor effectiveness of the vehicle and driver safety program.

Successful management of OHS depends on planning to eliminate or minimise risks at the earliest stage possible and then using other countermeasures to respond to risks that arise. The key planning or preparation steps are set out below.

**Create a culture of work related driving safety**

Evidence about successful vehicle and driver safety programs point not just to vehicle selection and training, but also to the importance of safety to the organisation.

A ‘culture of safety’ means that a high priority is given to safety and in addition, it is backed up by what people say and do.

In many workplaces, work related driving is considered secondary to the ‘real’ work that the person does. A culture of safety recognises that the driving task is often a much higher risk, and needs to be managed closely.

In a culture of safety, vehicle and driver safety is treated as part of the overall safety effort, and leadership has to be shown by making decisions about the fleet that benefit safety.

Defective vehicles are withdrawn from service, driving behaviour that is unsafe is challenged and unsafe situations are reported without fear of recrimination. In some cases, organisations provide a contact point (eg phone number on the vehicle) for people to report incidents of concern.

**Consult on work related driving safety**

Employers must consult on a range of health and safety matters so far as is reasonably practicable with health and safety representatives (HSRs) and employees who are or are likely to be directly affected.

This includes independent contractors and their employees in relation to matters over which the principal employer has control or should have control.

The range of health and safety matters includes identifying or assessing hazards or risks and making decisions on how to control risks, amongst others. It would also include the monitoring of employee health as provided under Section 22 of the Act.
HSRs must always be involved in any consultation that affects or is likely to affect the health and safety of members of their designated work group.

Additional ways to consult include health and safety committees or regularly scheduled meetings, such as tool box talks and production meetings.

Consultation must involve sharing information with HSRs and employees, giving HSRs and employees a reasonable opportunity to express their views, and taking those views into account.

Whatever the method chosen, consultation is based on the recognition that employee input and participation improves decision-making about health and safety matters.

WorkSafe’s Consultation on health and safety – A handbook for workplaces publication provides more information about consultation.

### Consultation checklist

- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted about the safety of vehicles considered for purchase?
- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted in the development of procedures for driver and vehicle safety?
- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted about actions taken following incidents?
- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted about information for drivers?
- Does the OHS committee include work related driving and vehicle safety on its agenda?
- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted when risk controls are introduced?
- Are OHS representatives and employees consulted on work scheduling?

### Develop work related driving safety policies and procedures

If you already have an OHS policy, make sure that it covers work related vehicle and driving safety. The policy should be developed in consultation with employees and would typically cover:

- senior management responsibility for safety
- define responsibilities for everyone in the fleet management process
- commitment to safety in selecting vehicles
- incident reporting
- commitment to keeping employees trained and informed.

The policy should be communicated to all employees and others, such as contractors, and clients, who might be impacted by the operation of the fleet.

Many organisations will have a Safe Vehicle Selection Policy and Safe Driving Policy to highlight both sides of the work related driving safety issue.
Employee sign off on safe driving policies is a way of ensuring everyone has seen and understands the policy.

Some policies are quite detailed, but usually the detail is covered in specific procedures. Procedures state what has to be done by whom and when.

These procedures are developed by using a risk management method and are sometimes called safe work procedures or safe work method statements.

Procedures should be relevant to the size and risk exposure of the organisation.

An organisation with a large fleet, operating in difficult conditions and with regular night driving may need more procedures than a small fleet doing routine trips in good conditions.

Sample procedure – Pre-start check of a vehicle

- Ensure there is enough fuel to get to the destination.
- Check the condition of tyres.
- Ensure windows and mirrors are clean and properly adjusted, and that the windscreen washer reservoir has sufficient liquid.
- Test lights to make sure they are all working, check oil (dipstick indicates level) and radiator fluid (only check if engine is cold).
- Check driving adjustments such as seat and steering wheel.
- Check mirrors are clean and properly adjusted.
- Notify the person responsible for vehicle maintenance if the vehicle is suspected to be unsafe. Don’t use the vehicle if it is suspected of being unsafe.

Select safe vehicles

When decisions to purchase vehicles for work related driving are made, there is an opportunity to meet both business objectives and reduce risks.

The fleet selection decision should include a risk assessment that takes into account the role of the vehicle and the conditions it will be used in. The assessment should include as a minimum:

- an assessment of the safety features that can prevent incidents (eg Electronic Stability Control (ESC))
- the level of occupant protection provided (eg 4 or 5 star rating)
- any after-market additions to the vehicle such as window tinting don’t place driver or other road users at additional risk
- the potential impact on other road users (eg bullbars and the weight and size of the vehicle)
- the views of drivers on the safety and suitability of the vehicle for the task.
The Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) conducts testing to give purchasers consistent information on the level of occupant protection provided by vehicles in serious front and side crashes.

Crash testing is the basis for a 0 to 5 stars rating scale. A 4 star rating is widely used by fleet managers as the minimum for assuring the protection of occupants.

Passive safety measures are designed to prevent injury should a crash occur. Passive safety measures also include airbags, seatbelts, cargo restraints and adjustable head rests.

Front airbags and side airbags are widely available, but curtain airbags are a less common standard feature. Curtain airbags are designed to protect the driver’s head in a crash, and research has indicated they can reduce driver deaths by 40% in the event of a side impact crash⁵.

Active safety measures are designed to prevent a crash occurring.

ESC helps drivers to avoid crashes by reducing the danger of skidding or losing control as a result of over-steering. ESC becomes active when a driver loses control of their car. It uses computer controlled technology to apply individual brakes and helps bring the car safely back on track without the danger of fish-tailing. This technology incorporates all the features of ABS and traction control, and Australian research estimated it will reduce the risk of injury in a single vehicle crash by 30%⁶.

Other active safety measures to be included in the vehicle assessment and selection process include:

- Daytime Running Lights provide constant headlight illumination and increase the ability of drivers to see cars in daytime
- no added window tinting improves visibility
- highly visible car colour improves visibility for others
- alert systems warn drivers of excessive speed.

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⁵ IIHS, Side airbags are reducing driver deaths in both cars and SUVs, Status Report, Vol 41, No. 8, October 7, 2006.

## Planning for work related driving safety

### Sample vehicle selection policy

The organisation will acquire fleet cars having safety standards that exceed the Australian Design Rules.

The recommended minimum requirements for passenger cars include:

- at least a 4 star rating in the Australasian New Car Assessment Program
- ABS braking
- Daytime Running Lights
- over-speed warning device
- driver, front passenger and side airbags
- centre rear lap sash seat belt
- cargo barriers
- first aid kits.

The following safety features are highly desirable in all passenger vehicles where practicable and meeting business operational requirements:

- side-curtain airbags
- Electronic Stability Control
- reverse collision warning systems
- intelligent speed assist.

Where possible, the organisation will aim to choose the safest vehicle when choosing between otherwise similar makes and models.

### Maintain a safe fleet

Selection of the safest possible vehicle needs to be backed up by a preventative maintenance program to ensure vehicle safety is maximised.

A maintenance system ensures that the manufacturer’s service recommendations are met and that the vehicle complies with roadworthiness requirements.

Procedures need to be prepared to outline the frequency of vehicle checks to enable reporting of problems and to keep records of maintenance documents.
Nominating a person to be responsible to maintain the fleet can help to make sure the different maintenance tasks are done and records kept up to date. This would include monitoring the upkeep of weekly logs and inspections checks, ensuring prescribed servicing takes place in accordance with manufacturer’s specifications and scheduling annual vehicle inspections.

This activity should be integrated into the employer’s system for managing OHS.

**Ensure drivers are competent and fit to drive**

The earliest point at which safe driving can be ‘raised’ as an issue is at the recruitment and selection stage.

Safe driving can be included in job descriptions and discussed in job interviews where the job involves significant amounts of driving.

Assess previous experience, including the driver’s record through referee reports and seek statements from the applicant about their record.

Formal licensing requirements should be checked and applicants advised of their responsibility to advise of any changes that may affect their eligibility to drive.

Medical examinations related to fitness to drive may be required, along with any licence specific requirements, such as eyesight testing.

Employees should be advised of the organisation’s safe driving policy, and in particular requirements to advise of any medications that may impair their ability to drive.

As identification of unsafe drivers is problematic, it is more appropriate to place the emphasis on preparing drivers to operate within the safe driving policy of the organisation.

**Inform and supervise drivers**

Part of the normal induction training for any new employee doing work related driving is coverage of the organisation’s driver and vehicle safety policies and procedures.

A driver induction should include:

- legal requirements, such as duty of care, speed limits and drugs and alcohol
- company requirements, such as pre-start checks and incident reports
- policies to be applied where drivers breach safety rules (eg retraining, discipline)
- understanding the causes and effects of fatigue
- understanding road conditions and driving precautions
- what to do in the case of a crash or emergency
- what records must be kept.

Induction is not only relevant to new employees, but also to those who move into positions with significant driving involved or with responsibility for the fleet (eg supervisors).

In addition to induction training, a ‘handover’ may be done for employees using a car for the first time or using a different make of car. The handover should cover the safety features of the car, basic operation and any individual adjustments for the driver (eg seats, steering wheel and mirrors).
More specialised training may be required for some fleets depending on the type of work and amount of driving involved. Training for special vehicles, such as four wheel drives in rough terrain, may be required. Training for driving in adverse conditions may also be appropriate.

As part of the program to promote safe driving, information about vehicle and driver safety should be provided. Information may include:

- information about the driving hazards (eg impact of wet road conditions on safe following distances)
- statistical information about crash risks (eg percentage of fleet vehicles involved in crashes)
- information about how drugs and alcohol affect driving (eg relationship between Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels and reaction times)
- information about the effect of medications on driving (eg impact of drowsiness on driving)
- information about fatigue and driving (eg how the body clock works)
- information about the use and effectiveness of safety features (eg adjusting headrests).

Direct supervision of drivers is rarely possible, so the emphasis must be on monitoring the procedures designed to reduce risks.

Supervisors need to respond to any incidents/infringements, feedback from drivers or issues raised in forums such as OHS committees or work group meetings.

In addition, supervisors need to actively promote safe driving and address any evidence of unsafe driving.

**Plan trips to minimise risks**

For regular driving journeys, planning can be done to minimise risks. Time should always be allocated to account for common delays, such as traffic and weather conditions.

If a safer route is available, then drivers should be instructed to use it.

In some cases, it may be safer to use alternatives, such as taxis, public transport or technological options, such as video conferencing.

The time allocated to reach destinations should not require the driver to compromise compliance with road rules (eg speed limits or fatigue requirements).

Work involving extended driving periods should have some built in time to allow for changing conditions and traffic hold ups.

Trips using roads in poor conditions and extreme weather conditions should only be carried out with the appropriate vehicles (eg 4WD vehicles in alpine regions).

The safe handling and storage of any luggage or equipment should be included in trip planning. Where work related equipment has to be removed from the vehicle, it should be possible without requiring awkward postures and heavy lifting.

Any equipment should be secured to minimise damage and to ensure it does not become loose in transit.

Trip planning should also include emergency response aspects, such as an assessment of the type of first aid kit needed, protective equipment (eg reflective vests) and emergency contact numbers.
Managing risk factors on the road

Work related driving is associated with a number of risk factors that alone or in combination increase both the likelihood and the severity of an incident.

The measures in the previous section should operate to limit the frequency and severity of these risk factors.

In this section, the nature of these risk factors is examined further and the ways to eliminate or reduce these risks is outlined. Despite planning, there may still need to be risk assessments that address conditions on the road.

**Speed**

Speed contributes to road trauma, and there is a clear relationship between speed and potential crash frequency and severity.

A 5km/h reduction in a 60km/h zone can result in a 31% reduction in crashes, and the risk of crashing increases by nearly six times when travelling 20km/h more than the average speed\(^7\).

Research has demonstrated that a 10% reduction in mean travel speed is likely to result in a 36% reduction in fatalities\(^8\).

Risk can be reduced by:

- observing speed limits
- driving at a speed appropriate for the conditions
- responding to speed warning alerts
- adjusting arrival times to compensate for delays
- planning trips on the basis of time within speed limits.

**Drugs and alcohol**

Use of drugs and alcohol impair a driver's ability to safely use a vehicle. A driver with a BAC level of .05 is twice as likely to be involved in a crash\(^9\), and the presence of alcohol increases the susceptibility to injury if involved in a crash.

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Managing risk factors on the road

The presence of cannabis and the drug methyl-amphetamine increases the risk of being involved in fatal crashes.

Drivers also need to be aware of the influence of any medications prior to driving.

Risk can be reduced by:
- adopting a zero drugs and alcohol policy for work related driving
- avoiding or minimising the use of alcohol prior to driving
- complying with road rules in relation to the prescribed level of alcohol
- using transport alternatives at functions with alcohol (designated driver, taxis)
- taking into account the influence of medications before driving.

Fatigue

Fatigue is mental or physical tiredness that affects a person’s ability to function. It may impair performance by reducing attentiveness, slowing reaction times, affecting judgement and reducing performance on skilled control tasks.

It is estimated that fatigue is a factor in up to 25% of crashes\(^\text{10}\). Being awake for 17 hours is estimated to cause a similar level of impairment to a .05 BAC level\(^\text{11}\).

Fatigue is associated with the following factors:
- sustained mental or physical effort
- inadequate rest breaks
- environmental stresses (such as heat, noise and vibration)
- disruption of circadian rhythms (the normal cycles of daytime activity and night sleep)
- long periods awake
- inadequate amount or quality of sleep over an extended period.

Signs of driver fatigue, such as lane drifting, variations in speed, delayed reactions and reduced concentration, indicate there is already a risk.

Individuals are unreliable judges of their level of fatigue. Consequently, the role of the employer in planning and scheduling work to minimise fatigue is paramount.

Risk can be reduced by:
- sharing the driving
- using alternatives, such as public transport or taxis
- planning longer trips to allow for regular breaks
- encouraging drivers to take power naps if sleepy
- minimising night driving (avoid driving at times when you’d normally be sleeping)
- enabling staff to sleep overnight in motels where necessary
- providing information on sleep, nutrition and drinks, such as water and coffee.

\(^\text{10}\) VicRoads Fact Sheet, No. 2, Driving and Fatigue.
Mobile phone use

The use of mobile phones while driving creates distractions to the primary task of driving. The ability to react to other vehicles, judge separation distances and maintain a constant speed are compromised by using a mobile phone.

The TAC and WorkSafe recommend that hands free calls be kept to a minimum and reserved for emergency type calls.

Handheld mobile phone use is illegal and should not be considered under any circumstances while driving. Texting or reading texts or caller ID should not be done at any time whilst driving.

Evidence shows using a mobile phone when driving results in a number of performance impairments, including longer reaction times, impaired lane position awareness, shorter following distances and reduced functional field of view\textsuperscript{12}.

Risk can be reduced by:
\begin{itemize}
  \item adopting a policy to ban the use of mobile phones while driving
  \item complying with the ban on use of hand held phones
  \item allowing calls to go to a message bank
  \item answering calls only after the car is pulled over to the side of the road
  \item leaving a message on voicemail advising incoming callers that you are driving and cannot take calls.
\end{itemize}

Adverse conditions

Driving on rough or unsealed roads or on roads subject to extreme conditions, such as snow, ice, fog or bushfires, presents increased risks.

Risk can be reduced by:
\begin{itemize}
  \item using alternative routes
  \item rescheduling trips to times of less extreme conditions
  \item providing information about driving techniques in adverse conditions, such as driving slowly in fog conditions
  \item using specialist vehicles suitable for conditions
  \item where appropriate, providing specialist training for driving in adverse conditions.
\end{itemize}

In-vehicle distractions

Distractions divert the driver’s attention from the driving task and impact on safety critical measures, such as stopping distances.

Common in-vehicle distractions are other passengers, drinking and eating, reaching for objects, personal grooming and being distracted by in-vehicle technologies or loose objects.

A recent survey of young drivers showed that nearly 60% of young drivers said they had been distracted by adjusting an MP3 player\(^\text{13}\).

Risk can be reduced by:

- not eating or drinking while driving
- presetting music/radio and climate controls
- securing any loose objects
- pulling over to adjust equipment, check maps or attend to personal grooming
- asking passengers to help with tasks (eg checking map for driver).

\(^\text{13}\) AAMI. Young Drivers Annual Road Safety Index, November 2007.
To remain effective, a vehicle and driver safety program needs to be monitored and regularly reviewed. Some matters, such as incidents, require immediate response, whereas others should be part of routine checks.

Emergency response
In order to respond to driving related incidents, a basic emergency system should include:
• a suitable first aid kit
• procedures for responding to a vehicle breakdown
• procedures for responding to a crash or related incident
• procedures for assisting others
• emergency contact numbers kept in the vehicle
• equipment such as reflective vests and reflective triangles.

Recovery and reporting
Following any incident, support should be provided to drivers who may have been involved in a crash or witnessed a crash.

Depending on the severity of the incident, support may be provided by work colleagues by a ‘buddy system’ or through the use of professional counsellors, who can de-brief and assist drivers.

Internal crash report or incident forms should be completed and forwarded to the person responsible for investigating and taking follow up action.

Incidents resulting in injury or the potential for serious injury must be reported to WorkSafe Victoria if they are within the scope of Part 5 of the OHS Act.

Once reported, incidents should be investigated and immediate action taken to prevent future incidents.

Investigation
‘Incidents’ related to work related driving includes matters other than crashes that might require investigation. An incident also includes a ‘near miss’ (i.e. any ‘incident’ that might have resulted in injury).

Investigation of an incident within an organisation should be undertaken by someone with training, and involve OHS representatives and employees, particularly in making recommendations to remedy the problems identified.

Incidents typically have multiple causes, and the focus should be on conditions that were responsible for the incident occurring.
Monitor and review work related driving safety

Routine monitoring
Checking whether your vehicle and driver safety prevention measures are working is essential if the work done in the planning stage is to pay off.
Routine monitoring includes inspection of vehicle checks and service records.

Is your program working?

☐ Are regular checks done of the licence status of drivers?

☐ Is driver training kept up to date and records kept of such training?

☐ Are vehicle checks done and is action taken to fix problems?

☐ Are there records to show that reported vehicle defects have been fixed by qualified personnel?

☐ Are vehicle service records kept up to date?

☐ Is there follow up of incident investigations to make sure changes are made?

☐ Are vehicles inspected to ensure safety equipment is present (e.g., first aid kit, protective clothing)?

☐ Are work schedules monitored for fatigue risks?

☐ Are employees reporting that procedures are effective?

Review
Review of the operation of your vehicle and driver safety program should happen at least on an annual basis and more regularly for large fleets or organisations that have high levels of work related driving.

A review uses the information collected in your routine monitoring along with any incident reports to see whether performance is improving.

Some basic performance measures might include:

• number of crashes or incidents per 100,000km
• cost of maintenance and repairs per 100,000km
• percentage of vehicle checks conducted as per employer program
• percentage vehicles serviced on time
• percentage defects repaired within time.
If the organisation is large enough to have meaningful data, it can compare with other organisations.

Smaller organisations may have to rely on comparisons with industry averages often published by government or industry bodies.

Apart from the information provided by maintenance records, incident reports and vehicle checks, a review should seek feedback from drivers about issues that may impact on safety.

Peer to peer debriefs after incidents have been found to be a very effective form of improving driver behaviour and awareness.

Where an organisation has an OHS committee or fleet safety group, a review of the program should be part of the agenda.

Part of any review should be information about new safety features that come onto the market, so that future vehicle purchase can consider these.

Examples include:

- alcohol interlocks
- pedestrian protection (eg bonnets that flex on impact)
- active braking systems
- intelligent speed assist systems.
WorkSafe (worksafe.vic.gov.au) and the TAC (tacafety.com.au and howsafeisyourcar.com.au) provide further advice and information on work related safe driving. Other sources of information include:

- VicRoads  vicroads.vic.gov.au
- RACV  racv.com.au
- VACC  vacc.com.au
- ANCAP  ancap.com.au
- MUARC  monash.edu.au/muarc