

Expert opinion

PMP vehicle safety comes in all sizes

By Peter Young



As a pest management professional (PMP), you focus on the work you and your employees do for your customers, from inspections to exterminations. But it's important to remember that your employees travel to customer locations multiple times each day.

Did you know that transportation incidents are the leading cause of occupational deaths, according to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)? And the most costly lost-time workers' compensation injury claims result from motor vehicle crashes, according to the [National Council on Compensation Insurance](#)?

Plus, consider the impact of losing valuable equipment, the dangers and cost of chemical spills, and the impact of third-party civil suits seeking financial retribution for negligence or damage.

You should consider this financial impact, no matter how big or small your company. Many risks are universal, whether you have one vehicle or a fleet — drivers who speed or tailgate, distracted driving caused by cell phone use or texting, to name a few.

Improving driver safety

Ensuring your vehicles are inspected regularly and well maintained should be a priority. But don't stop there. The [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) estimates poor driving behavior causes 90 percent of vehicle accidents, so driver safety also needs to be a priority.

Start by hiring safe drivers, and remember that a past driving record is an important indicator of future performance. Here are some hiring tips:

- Gather as much driving history information as possible on the employment application, including overall experience and types of vehicles driven.
- Require a valid driver's license for the state in which they reside, making a copy for your records.
- Check the license to determine whether they are qualified and licensed to operate the type of vehicle they will be driving.
- Review the applicant's Motor Vehicle Record (MVR). The MVR is one of the best tools to evaluate an applicant's past driving performance.
- Discuss the past driving record in the face-to-face interview.
- Consider background and reference checks, as well as medical and drug testing.

You may also give applicants a written test to assess general driving knowledge, and make sure he or she understands the rules of the road (Make sure the tests relate to the knowledge and skills necessary for the position and are not discriminatory). Road tests are also a good way to determine whether applicants can perform the tasks required.

Training

Once you have hired a new employee, provide safe driving courses with defensive driving tactics and regular refresher courses. Make sure these classes review guidelines for cell phone use, texting and other causes of distracted driving.

When drivers get in accidents, you need to get a full report. If there are multiple accidents with one driver, you need to look at trends, evaluate their ability to drive and consider refresher courses.

As long as driving is part of the PMP's job, safe driving should be a priority for your business.

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In the news

[Agencies work together in the aftermath of Isaac](#)

"The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Small Business Administration have come together following the aftermath of Hurricane Isaac to provide business owners, homeowners, renters, and anyone affected by the storm, disaster recovery assistance," reports StTammanyNews.com, Slidell, La.

From the *PMP* archives

[Avoid hose reel problems with these 'real' hose tips](#)

In this April 12 *Buzz Online* enews column, Andrew Greess, president of Quality Equipment & Spray, takes vehicle safety from the standpoint of hose reel preventive care and maintenance.

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