



Accident Record Keeping

» Ensuring Fleet Safety Through Better Driving Practices

Maintenance, mileage, delivery, fuel and payroll records are vital to the successful operation of a fleet. They indicate strengths and weaknesses within the company and management system and can indicate needed changes in strategy or operations. The same is true for accident records. Maintain these as you would your other important business documents and to comply with the law.

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Benefits of Accident Recording

1. Identification of high risk or problem routes, deliveries and types of equipment that can pose a safety problem.
2. Evaluation of the impact of your present safety program on reducing the frequency and severity of fleet accidents.
3. Allows comparison of accident experience from one time period to another.
4. Assists you or safety professionals in the formulation of solutions to safety problems.
5. Identifies accident repeaters and assists in improved job placement.
6. Provides a starting point for accident investigations and analysis.
7. Creates interest in safety and accident prevention among supervisors and drivers.
8. Helps in complying with state and federal regulations.
9. Supports the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the management system.
10. Assists your Insurance Company in the expeditious handling of claims.

Accident Records

Maintaining accident records needn't be time consuming or difficult. In most cases, an accident file arranged by year is all that is needed. Accident records should be easily accessible and well organized. Police reports, repair bills and accident investigations can also be included. The Hanover Fleet Accident Analysis can be used as an initial accident log. After accident investigations have been completed, a summation of your fleet accident experience, including cause analysis, will be available. The analysis will help in directing safety efforts at specific problem areas. All accidents regardless of the extent of damage or injury should be recorded.

Often, the difference between a minor accident and a tragedy is only a matter of luck. Use your accident records to begin the beneficial process of accident investigation.

Recordkeeping Requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations

If your fleet is subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, recordkeeping requirements should be consulted. Regulations that required direct reporting of accidents to the Federal Highway Administration have been eliminated. Accident data is now transferred by most states to a Federal Highway Administration database. SAFETYNET is a computerized database of roadside safety inspections and accident information.

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Accident Definition

For recordkeeping purposes, an accident is defined as a collision that results in any of the following:

- A fatality, at the scene or within 30 days
- Bodily injury to a person who, as a result of the injury, immediately receives medical treatment away from the scene of the accident
- One or more vehicles incurs "disabling damage," requiring the vehicle(s) to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other vehicle.

Accident Register

Motor carriers must maintain a register of accidents meeting the FMCSA definition. The information must be retained for a period of at least one year after an accident occurs and must include:

- Date of the accident
- City or town nearest the accident site
- State in which the accident occurred
- Driver's name
- Number of persons injured
- Number of fatalities
- Whether hazardous materials were released (other than fuel spilled from the fuel tanks of vehicles involved in the accident)

Additional Reports

Motor carriers are also required to retain for one year copies of state accident reports, reports required by other governmental authorities and insurance company reports. However, to realize the benefits of accident recordkeeping, compare and analyze your accident experience over at least a three-year period.

State Regulations

Many states have adopted their own regulations for the reporting of accidents. Our Loss Control Department can assist you in determining these requirements.

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Accident Review Boards

Many companies have established accident review boards that determine the preventability of vehicle accidents. This is important for establishing responsibility for vehicle accidents, which are often tied to driver incentive programs and performance standards developed by fleet management. Incentive programs give much needed recognition to safe drivers. Penalizing drivers for non-preventable accidents will detract from your safety efforts. Accident review boards add fairness to incentive programs, advance the fleet safety program and gather information and facts concerning accidents. This information will be used in accident investigation. Carefully determining how an accident could have been prevented will also help in establishing training objectives to prevent future accidents.

Preventable Accident

A preventable accident is defined as any accident involving a vehicle, unless properly parked, that results in property damage or personal injury, and in which the driver failed to do everything he/she reasonably could have done to prevent or avoid the accident.

The Accident Review Committee

When possible, the accident review committee should be comprised of drivers, mechanics, managers and supervisors. Accident review board members review all accident records and carefully determine preventability or non-preventability. The records may include accident reports, photographs, diagrams, maintenance schedules and vehicle condition reports. Written committee reports include recommendations for prevention of future accidents.

Classes of Preventable Accidents

Backing Accidents

Responsibility for backing safely is entirely the driver's. Backing is dangerous only if the driver neglects to make sure the way is clear during the entire movement. Backing should be avoided as much as possible.

Intersection Accidents

Stop lights, stop signs or right-of-way is no protection against collision with violators, funeral processions, fire, police or ambulance vehicles.

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Classes of Preventable Accidents continued

Pedestrian Accidents

Whether or not pedestrians have the right-of-way or are jaywalking, pedestrian accidents should not be decided non-preventable unless the investigation fails to uncover anything that the driver could have reasonably done to prevent the accident.

Rear-End Collisions

Collisions with the rear of the vehicle are seldom excusable. Most rear-end collisions can be avoided by foresight in controlling speed and allowing sufficient following distance.

Traffic Lane Encroachment Accidents

Such accidents result from passing, weaving, squeeze plays, shutouts or entering a line of moving traffic. Such accidents are caused by trespassing on the right of others to move in a straight line without interference.

Accidents Resulting from Mechanical Condition

Any accident blamed on mechanical failure that reasonable and prudent attention could have foreseen but was not reported for repair, including any accident blamed on mechanical failure as the result of a driver operating his/her vehicle in excess of its mechanical limits.

Accidents with Fixed-Rail Vehicles

Trains and streetcars always have the right-of-way, because they run on fixed tracks, cannot dodge or maneuver and need greater braking distance than rubber-tire vehicles.

Collisions with Stationary Objects, Non-Collision Accidents, Unattended Vehicle Accidents and Miscellaneous Accidents

Accidents involving scraping or striking stationary objects sometimes are caused by taking emergency action. Investigation usually reveals that the driver was not driving defensively.

Accidents Blamed on Adverse Weather Conditions

Accidents blamed on skidding or bad weather conditions are classed as preventable because they can be prevented by reducing speed, installing skid chains, using sand or pulling off the road.

Parking Accidents

Double parking, failure to put out warning devices, and rollaway accidents from a parked position normally should be classed preventable.

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Reduce Your Risk for a Loss

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