

PRAISE

Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees

Case Study: ALSA

ETSC’s PRAISE project addresses the safety aspects of driving at work and driving to work. Its aim is to promote best practice in order to help employers secure high road safety standards for their employees.

In this case study, Eduardo Mayoral Maestro, Directory of Safety and Quality at ALSA, discusses the organisation’s approach to work related road risk and road safety.

FACTFILE

Company: ALSA

Sector: Transportation

Fleet/Employees: 3,132 buses and over 8,914 employees.

ALSA is the leading operator in the Spanish sector of passenger transport by road, transporting more than 333 million passengers per year. With over one hundred years of experience, ALSA is integrated into The National Express Group, an international public transport operator running buses, coaches, and railways in the UK, Mainland Europe, North America, North Africa, and the Middle East. They provide a wide range of regional, national, international, urban, discretionary (coach hire), and tourist services. Additionally, ALSA specialises in the management of bus stations, service areas, and vehicle maintenance areas.





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What is the approach to managing road risk at ALSA?

At ALSA, safety is one of the core values of the company and we believe we should ensure the safety of all our passengers, employees and the general public related to the services we provide.

Our safety management system establishes mandatory rules for all safety-related processes, such as the competence and fitness of drivers and maintenance staff, safety of vehicles and facilities, risk assessment, investigation of accidents and incidents, validation of changes with an impact in safety, etc. We have implemented an Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series (OHSAS) certified Risk Prevention scheme and a number of our own internal safety programmes.

What road safety initiatives has ALSA started?

In 2010 we started implementing our safety programme "Driving Out Harm", which was rolled out across the National Express Group. The aim of the programme is to emphasise the importance of safety in the business and to introduce new standards for the initial training and continual development of drivers.

At the heart of this are the Golden Rules for drivers:

- Put the safety of passengers first
- Be fit for work (no alcohol or drugs and fully rested)
- Check vehicles and only drive if it is safe
- Drive safely and drive defensively
- Report all accidents, injuries and near misses

Each year, the "Driving Out Harm" programme is reviewed independently and the recommendations of these reviews are used to drive further improvements.

We also reward safety internally. To help motivate drivers and promote good practice we hold regular recognition and reward initiatives. These are based on driver performance and include the recognition of good safety practices by employees.

Which do you think is the most important element in terms of improving road safety?

We believe the human factor is critical in managing road safety. It is key to ensure that all drivers have at least the minimum competence, skills and fitness level. Therefore, we have been developing robust processes for the recruitment, hiring, training, monitoring and regular assessment of drivers.

Currently, we have five training simulators in Oviedo, Segovia, Marrakech and Agadir, nine Training Centres and 15 Training Rooms in Spain and Morocco. We also have in place a total number of eleven vehicles for training purposes. Drivers can tackle a range of driving conditions in the simulator and respond to them in a safe and controlled manner. They can then put this learning into practice by going on the road in the training vehicles and receive coaching from our driver trainers.

We use daily morning team briefings to discuss safety issues with drivers, such as route changes. This allows drivers to raise any concerns they have.



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How do you manage issues such as speeding and fatigue?

Over the past year, we have focused our efforts on identifying and managing both speeding and fatigue. Currently, all vehicles in the ALSA fleet have on-board systems in place and GPS devices fitted that allow us to know, in real time, the speed of each vehicle, They continually log events in which speed limits are exceeded and are capable of matching these speed incidents with vehicles and individual drivers.

Incidents of speeding are logged and then reported to a driver's line manager within 5 working days. The driver's line manager must then review the accuracy of the report, notify the driver of the speeding incident, and initiate appropriate corrective actions within 7 days.

It is important to us that our drivers are in the best possible physical and mental conditions to work. Therefore, we have developed systems for planning the driving times and rest periods so as to prevent the automatic allocation of driving shifts with maximum driving times and minimum rest periods. This also helps us to make sure that the driving and rest time rules set out by the European Union (Regulation EC 561/2006) are not exceeded. We have also developed programmes such as "For Your Health", to help promote healthy practices to help prevent sleepiness and improve general staff wellbeing.

Do you have a specific policy regarding drugs and alcohol consumption?

We know that drug and alcohol consumption while driving is a social problem affecting most countries, including those in which we operate. The statistics show that the consumption of these substances leads to collisions and deaths, including by people driving for work.

At ALSA we are not unfamiliar with these issues and we have been carrying out preventive controls on drug and alcohol consumption amongst our employees for many years. The decision to carry out these controls within the company has been mutually agreed between the company and the workers' representatives. Therefore, its implementation is not a one-sided decision, but has the approval and sign-off by both parties.

Additionally, we are installing alcolock devices in our fleet. This way, we want to ensure that any driver showing a blood alcohol level that exceeds the allowed level cannot perform the service.

Finally, we would like to highlight our effort in raising awareness among all our employees of the need to perform their job under the best possible conditions, in order to ensure both their own safety and other people's safety.

As a bus and coach company, how do you manage safety on board?

Since 2015 we have been implementing the project 'World Class Maintenance' in National Express in order to deliver excellence in the fleet maintenance, ensuring maximum safety standards, reliability and readiness.

This included the development of an app (called MiAlsa), which helps drivers to perform pre and post service inspections correctly and to then communicate any type of incident and/or problems in the vehicle. We also design and implement maintenance plans that have been approved by the vehicle manufacturers.



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We are also in the process of installing lane departure detectors and advanced braking systems in all of our trucks.

Is passengers' behaviour key to ensuring a safe journey?

How a passenger behaves while he/she is at the station or on-board the bus may entail risks for their safety. Therefore, we developed a set of audio-visual materials to inform our customers on how to improve their safety.

This includes on-board safety, such as encouraging them to wear seat belts, but also safety at bus stations. We encourage passengers to use specific pedestrian lanes around the station and not to approach moving vehicles.

Which are your priorities for safety in 2018?

Besides the speeding control mentioned above, this year we are making a significant effort to monitor the performance and behaviour of our drivers to improve both driving techniques and driving style.

For that purpose, we already have a smart camera system installed in one thousand vehicles in our fleet in Spain (around 45% of the total fleet). This system is allowing us to identify and record any type of significant event/incident that occurs during service and to share it with each driver in order to improve their awareness and safety training. We hope to roll these cameras out into another 800 vehicles in the fleet by 2019.

What has been the effect of your safety policies? Have you managed to reduce the number of accidents?

We have seen that all our road safety efforts have been rewarded with an overall reduction in the number of collisions. For example, in the five years following the introduction of the "Driving Out Harm" programme (2012-2017), we saw a reduction of 80% in our Fatalities and Weighted Injuries (FWI) index. In terms of responsible collision rates, the reduction was 31% over the same five year period.

In the vehicles which have had the smart cameras installed the longest, we are starting to see encouraging early reductions in 'event severity'. Therefore, as we roll out the programme we hope to see further improvements in driver safety standards.

Have you obtained any external recognition from successfully reducing accident rates?

Among many external recognitions received over the last few years, I would highlight two international awards: the Fundación MAPFRE Prevention of Accidents Award in 2017 and the Prince Michael International Road Safety Award in 2016.



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