

# PRAISE

## Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees Case Study: National Vehicle Distribution Ltd

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, Niall McNally, Head of HR and Safety at National Vehicle Distribution, discusses the organisation's approach to work related road risk and road safety.

### FACTFILE

Company: National Vehicle Distribution Ltd

Sector: Automotive Logistics

Fleet/Employees: 350 staff, 135 specialised car transporter trucks.

Founded in 1980, National Vehicle Distribution Ltd (NVD) is a family owned Irish company providing outbound automotive logistics services to car manufacturers and fleet operators.



### **What processes has NVD put in place to tackle work related road safety?**

At NVD we use a range of techniques and processes to address road safety in general and to target specific practice problems. At the top level, we are regularly audited and have ISO accreditation for 9001, 14001 and 18001 in place. We then look individually at specific issues in order to develop the most effective solutions.

For example, in 2017 we launched a new Drug and Alcohol Abuse policy and have introduced random breathalyser tests for truck drivers and car drivers entering and exiting our compounds

We have a modern HR Information System which is used to track all health and safety training. It prompts managers and the Safety department in advance if a staff member needs refresher training or is nearing the expiry of safety certification. This system came live in January 2017 and represented a significant investment for us as a company. It also tracks driver's licenses and CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) training and similarly will issue alerts when the certification is nearing expiry

We provide flexible working arrangements for drivers who wish to have a good work-life balance along with flights home for drivers every second weekend when they are working abroad (such as in the UK) to anywhere in Europe. We also quickly resolve any grievances presented. These types of schemes are popular with our drivers and a significant number use them. Up to a third of our drivers work on some form of part-time arrangement (e.g. four days on / four days off) and these types of work and life balance arrangements help to reduce the risk of driver fatigue

Additionally, during 2017 we appointed six supervisors in our Transport Department and divided the driver body up into six teams. The main motivation for doing so was to ensure that driver behaviour regarding health and safety is closely supervised and supported in the field.

Unannounced Driver-Dealer audits are conducted to ensure that our drivers are following safety procedures in the field and not only in our supervised compounds.

### **How does road safety fit into the wider health and safety programme at NVD?**

We are continually working to improve general health and wellbeing as we believe that staff who are happier at work are also safer at work. For example, they're more inclined to follow training and less inclined to cut corners for reasons of stress or low motivation.

Our well-being programme is designed to ensure that staff feel respected for their contribution and that our working environment is as free as possible from negative hygiene factors. We provide our staff with good basic pay (upper quartile), pensions, sick pay scheme, tooling and tyre schemes, bonus schemes and

referral schemes. We provide Employee Assistance Programme, banked hour schemes and block release opportunities for drivers. We provide all required PPE for all staff, and in the case of our drivers, our PPE is compliant to EN standards for International drivers.

### **How do you discuss, deal with and learn from any incidents that do occur?**

Senior management including the CEO regularly attend weekly operations meetings where safety performance is always reviewed. Road safety is always high on weekly operational meeting agendas and monthly senior management meeting agendas.

The HR Manager and the Environmental Health and Safety Manager have a weekly meeting with the Transport Manager and Driver Supervisors. Health and safety is a key item on the agenda and any incidents or accidents from the previous week are discussed.

Accidents and incidents are categorised into three types:

- **Level 1 – Time Lost** – An accident / incident which results in time lost for employees.
- **Level 2 – No Time Lost** – An accident / incident which is of a minor nature and resulting in no time lost to employees
- **Level 3 - Near Miss** - An unplanned event that did not result in injury, illness or damage but had the potential to do so.

We have also recently introduced an app for all employees for the reporting of an incident or near miss. Once the report is submitted it is sent directly to the Health and Safety Manager and the HR Manager. This makes it much easier to record an incident as it can be done almost “real time”.

We promote certain safety themes from time to time depending on experience in the field. For example, we recently placed a large emphasis on the following of proper cab exit procedures for drivers.

### **What kind of road safety initiatives has NVD started as a result?**

We are a learning organisation and so, we always seek to improve our processes, systems, training and practices if we become aware that the cause of an accident could be reduced or eliminated from our operation.

A recent example involved one of our drivers who injured himself while crossing over a drawbar of a truck. Upon investigation, it was determined that the practice of crossing over drawbars could be unsafe. Therefore, we changed our procedures and re-trained all drivers so that they are now prohibited from crossing over drawbars.

A second example was that during 2015 and the first half of 2016, we were reporting a trend of ankle injuries caused by the loading / unloading of trucks. We implemented a training and awareness programme for drivers regarding slips, trips and falls and have had no ankle injuries reported in the last 12 months.

A third example was where a trend had emerged concerning collisions involving the back of our trucks with other objects or road users, often referred to as “tail-swing” collisions. This was a tail swing problem where the tail end protrudes slightly when making a corner. We ran a specific training and refresher programme on this issue and the incidents have dropped. This included the making of a safety video.

### **Are telematics systems used as part of your approach to road safety?**

We do use telematics monitoring in our vehicles, with a focus on safety, the environment and fuel efficiency. The driver scores obtained from the monitoring are then analysed and reported on a weekly basis.

In early 2017 we launched a new driver bonus based on driver safety. A driver who has no accidents or incidents, no damage and a minimum driving score of 90% over a 12 month period may apply for an annual bonus of € 400.00. We believe that this bonus helps encourage safe driving practices by rewarding those drivers who demonstrate good driving behaviour.

We have many more examples but the kernel point is that we are very alert and proactive in continually trying to re-engineer and improve our safety processes, training and systems as we continually observe cause and effect in practice.

### **Does you set yourself safety performance targets?**

We keep track of our progress by measuring a number of safety related key performance indicators. These are Accidents and Incidents, Road Traffic Accidents, Near Misses, Driver Scores, Driver Hours Infringements and Damage.

We have a weekly target of zero accidents and incidents and zero road traffic accidents and we have an annual target of a reduction of the percentage of accidents year on year.

As I mentioned earlier, we use a telematics system to provide each driver with a score. The target score is 90% for 85% of all drivers and this target increases year on year based on achieved improvements. The scores are reviewed weekly and sent to all drivers. Driver supervisors follow up to address any worrying trends, and consistently high-performing drivers are acknowledge and may be rewarded too.

We use driver scores to inform our incident investigation, by correlating historical scores with our investigations. We also take a proactive approach by analysing the scores and taking preventive action on any specific issues.

All employees are strongly encouraged to report all near misses to allow the company to take preventive action and help avoid accidents of all types. While there is currently no target set regarding the amount of near misses that are expected to be recorded, auditors (both internal and external) monitor the volume and type of near misses recorded and how effectively they are closed out

We also monitor compliance with Driver Hours rules, with a target of 100% compliance. Drivers must download their information on a weekly basis so that any infringements can be examined and addressed in a timely manner. This helps to make awareness training and any disciplinary action more effective.

### **Have you noticed any economic effects as a result of improving of road safety at NVD?**

Striving for a safety based operating culture is both challenging and rewarding. We don't view safety management as a cost burden. We view it as an investment in the well-being of our staff. Our driver churn has fallen significantly from 51% in 2014 to just 6% in 2017, which in turn has led to the creation of a stable driver workforce. This has enabled us to compete and win new business internationally.

In our experience, spending money on safety management is truly an investment that continues to pay dividends far greater than the initial costs. We are hopeful that the work we are doing will also result in a reduction in our insurance premiums over the long run.

We have found that when we combine our safety programmes with proactive employee engagement and lean management initiatives, we create a positive working environment that is characterised by higher staff morale, higher productivity and ultimately the creation of a competitive advantage.

### **What have the safety-related results of your work been? Have you seen notable improvements?**

Over the last few years we have seen a substantial improvement in a number of areas, each of them directly linked to the policies and initiatives we've put into place. Our Average Driver Performance score, produced using our telematics system, has increased from 86% in 2014 to 94% in 2017. The number of transport related accidents that resulted in time off work dropped from 12 in 2015 to just 2 in 2017. We've also seen associated reductions in damage costs and fuel consumption.

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