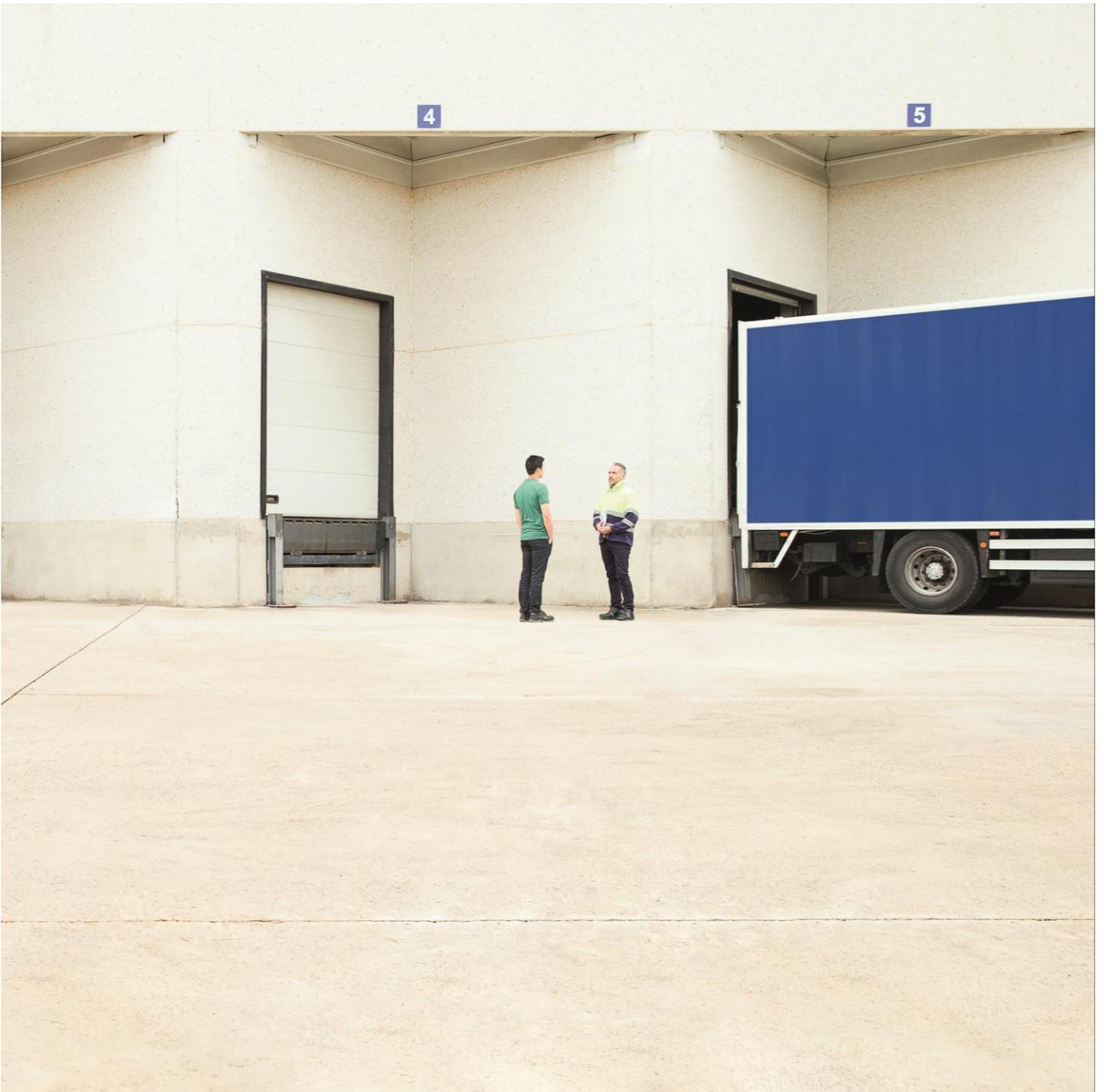


Haulage Risks

A Risk Insight



There are many risks associated with the operation of Large Goods Vehicles (LGVs), some peculiar to the haulage industry. In this risk insight we explore some of the ways of managing these risks effectively. It is beyond the scope of this publication to look at areas of compliance, so we look at some of the other areas operators can focus on to manage risks effectively.

Leadership

Good work-related road safety management starts from the top of every organisation, not just in terms of signing off on any initiatives, and making sure any funding is in place, but also from a leadership perspective. The same policies and procedures relating to safety should apply to managers, in their cars, as it does to employees driving LGVs, and where a mixed fleet is operated there should be a level of consistency throughout the different vehicle types.

If you have a policy in place that states you should not use a mobile phone whilst driving and a member of the leadership team is seen driving out of the depot deep in conversation on his or her 'phone, are the LGV drivers going to take it seriously? Similarly, if you are managing safety through measuring driver behaviours using telemetry data, why shouldn't this apply to managers in their cars too?

Management

The manager who the LGV driver reports to – often a depot or transport manager – has the most critical role in ensuring that the driver drives safely. They are the ones who can influence the safety-operational balance, who can determine the underlying root cause(s) following a collision or telemetry data exception (the root cause analysis should focus on operational and management issues, not just on the driver), and who see the drivers and the vehicles on a regular basis.

Without strong management of work-related road safety, by these 'line' managers, sustainable improvements in the collision and claim rates are unlikely.

Fatigue management

You cannot just rely on telematics and/or tachographs to manage fatigue with your drivers. You need to understand the risks that a driver will suffer from fatigue, and put the appropriate management systems in place, raise awareness about the issue and provide any training as appropriate.

There are many areas to look at, including the importance of taking regular breaks from driving and how long these breaks are (regardless of any legal requirement), the total length of the working day including any commuting time, sleep apnoea, the importance of getting a good night's sleep, hydration, the use of medicines, the importance of achieving the correct seating position, personal circumstances, if any physical work is undertaken, etc.

Distractions

Distracted driving is one of the main root causes of why collisions occur (along with speed and impairment through alcohol or drugs), so this is an area that requires strong leadership and management. Mobile telephones are the most obvious in-cab distraction, and there have been some high profile prosecutions of drivers who have caused fatal collisions where they have not seen stationary traffic ahead and not braked, or braked far too late, before crashing into the vehicle at the end of the queue. Drivers who use mobile telephones whilst driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, have a four times increased risk of being involved in a collision, and a driver using a hands-free telephone has similar reaction times to someone at twice the UK drink drive limit.

You should have some robust policies and procedures regarding the use of mobile telephones whilst driving, along with any other in-cab equipment that you provide or that drivers' use (such as laptops, MP3 players, etc.), and make sure that you have an audit process in place to make sure these are being complied with.

Telematics and technology

The use of telematics in haulage operations is quite common, but outside of the standard operational use of this technology, such as the traditional 'track and trace', 'geofencing' and security management, there may be driver behaviour data being generated that will supplement any risk assessments you have carried out to show the dynamic risks of how a vehicle is being driven 24/7.

Unfortunately there are no agreed standards between Telematics Service Providers as to what constitutes driver behaviours, and different suppliers use different algorithms to calculate what, on the face of it, look like similar incidents. If you operate a mixed fleet, and utilise the OEM supplied telematics, then you may well have a number of different systems fitted across your fleet, and it is very difficult to benchmark drivers using different vehicles. Despite this, the following behaviours will give you some insights into the dynamic risks, especially if you analyse the frequency of events and any trends:

Speeding

Many of the legacy telematics systems can only measure a threshold speed, which is unhelpful in vehicles fitted with speed limiters. Of more interest are systems that measure speed by speed zone, so that you can see if your drivers are exceeding the posted speed limits in urban areas, where the risk of being involved in a collision with a vulnerable road user (see below) is much greater.

Harsh Braking and Acceleration

Almost all telematics systems, even legacy ones, can measure this – often this is used as an eco-driving measurement, but has obvious synergies with safe driving too, especially the frequency of harsh braking events, and any trends.

The messaging of this measurement needs to be carefully managed - you don't want to discourage harsh braking in an emergency situation! What you want to address is the need to brake harshly in the first place.

Harsh cornering

This is less common with legacy telematics systems but does provide good insights into how vehicles are being driven around bends. Where load stability may be in question (is the container packed correctly?) then this can give some good insight into the risk of a collision or rollover based on the driver's behaviours and/or the stability of the load.

Fatigue

This is obviously measured, from a legal perspective, from the tachograph data, but operators should remember that what is legal is not necessarily safe. Current best practice is for a driver to take a break every 2 hours, or sooner if they start to feel tired – this is obviously in conflict with some elements of the tachograph and drivers' hours regulations. Telematics can help you monitor and manage this element of the risk profile, and given fatigue is one of the biggest work-related road risks facing the haulage industry, is something that should be managed effectively.

If drivers are operating on shifts and/or during 'unsocial' hours, especially between midnight and 6 a.m., when a person's circadian rhythm (body clock) is trying to induce sleep, then there is also a significant increase in risk of the driver falling asleep at the wheel. If these journeys cannot be eliminated then there is a need to raise awareness about the risks with the drivers, as well as the steps drivers can take to minimise the risk of falling asleep whilst driving, as well as looking at technology that can detect the early signs of fatigue and alert the driver (and management) that there is an issue.

Management of telemetry data

This is the most important aspect of any initiative looking to use driver behaviour telemetry data to manage risk. If the managers are not looking at exception reports and trend data, and engaging with the drivers about this, then any long term behavioural change is unlikely.

It is also important for managers to understand the root cause(s) of why a driver is generating exception reports, and not assume that this is simply down to poor driving that can be addressed by a training intervention. There may be an operational reason why the driver is exhibiting these behaviours, to achieve some form of operational metric.

Vehicle selection

As well as standard fit telematics, the specification of any available Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS) should be considered. These safety systems are becoming widely available on cars, and from 1st November 2015 EU legislation will mandate the fitting of Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) systems on most newly registered LGVs over 7.5 tonnes. AEB works by monitoring the road

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ahead using multiple sensors, and alerts the driver if there is a stationary or slow moving vehicle up ahead, and if the driver takes no action the system automatically applies the brakes, which depending on the speeds involved will either avoid the collision or lower the speed of the impact. If analysis of your collision history indicates that these types of crashes are prevalent in your fleet then this type of technology will help prevent some of these types of incidents.

Vulnerable road users

Where vehicles are operating in urban areas one of the biggest risks is posed by vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The number of cyclists using the road is increasing, which is leading to a higher number being involved in collisions. Given the inherent vulnerability of these road users, it is important to look at how to minimise the risk of being involved in a collision with a cyclist.

The main risk is associated with LGVs turning left, often where the cyclist is not seen by the driver before executing the manoeuvre, either because they have failed to spot the cyclist or the cyclist is in a blind spot on the nearside of the vehicle. This situation could arise because the driver has overtaken the cyclist just before turning left, the driver is in slow moving traffic and the cyclist is attempting to pass on the nearside, or the driver is waiting in stationary traffic (especially at traffic lights) and the cyclist has pulled up next to the vehicle.

Management issues to consider

- Have you risk assessed your journeys/routes to take into consideration known cyclist collision 'black spots' and high risk times of day (especially during the rush hour)?
- Would it be possible to re-route/re-schedule any of these journeys?
- Have you minimised any time pressures on the driver, so that they are able to drive safely to achieve their objectives? An example of an issue in this area would be unrealistic delivery schedules, meaning that the driver would have to take unacceptable risks to achieve their targets.
- The overall well-being of employees is an important element in any effective work-related road risk management programme. A tired driver is less likely to spot hazards, so a robust fatigue management policy should be in place and audited to check it is being followed, that ensures drivers are not driving when tired.
- Do the operational needs of the business conflict with safe driving requirements? The best safe driving policies in the world will not be effective if operational requirements mean that they cannot be followed by the driver – it is often more effective to make a small change in operational practices that will allow drivers to drive safely. If operational needs are dictated by your customers, engage with them and explain any risks that arise out of their Service Level Agreements.
- Have you raised the issue of the vulnerability of other road users, such as cyclists, pedestrians (especially children) and horse riders? If drivers are aware of some of the specific issues associated with other road users then they can modify their driving accordingly. Get the drivers to think about how they would feel if they were one of these vulnerable road users sharing the road with one of your vehicles!
- Have you engaged with your neighbouring business, schools and colleges to help raise awareness of the risks involved and to give them an insight into the challenges drivers of LGVs face when operating in urban environments?

Driver issues to consider

- Is the driver fully concentrating at all times, and not distracted in any way? Examples of distractions would be the use of hands-free telephones, satellite navigation systems etc. A robust policy on driver distractions (especially the use of telephones) should be in place with an audit trail to demonstrate compliance. It is also important that drivers retain full concentration in slow moving and stationary traffic, especially if planning to turn left, as these are the times when cyclists are likely to pull up alongside the vehicle.
- Is the driver observing the traffic conditions all around the vehicle, so that they can anticipate the likely actions of other road users and, in this case, especially cyclists?
- Is the driver suffering from fatigue? It is important that drivers are well rested before they start driving and that they are empowered to take breaks when appropriate.
- Has the driver had his or her eyesight tested in the last two years and, if required, are they wearing their prescribed glasses or contact lenses?
- Are drivers aware of the risks? If a driver is looking for something specific, like a cyclist on the nearside of the vehicle, then they are more likely to spot it, so raising awareness about the issue will help ensure that drivers are always on the lookout for riders.
- Are the drivers always giving clear signals in plenty of time, especially when turning left? It is important to give other road users, and in this case especially cyclists, plenty of warning of impending direction changes. This is true even when in slow moving or stationary traffic, as a left hand indicator may prevent a cyclist from choosing to pull up alongside the vehicle or 'undertake'. It is also worth reminding drivers that just because they are signalling, this does not give them an automatic right of way – they must first check that it is safe (and legal) to carry out the manoeuvre.

Vehicles

- Is the vehicle well maintained, especially with respect to working lights? If the left hand indicator is not working then a cyclist would not necessarily know that the vehicle is about to make a left turn. Make sure that the vehicle's windows and mirrors are kept clean and ice free, as this will help the driver spot potential hazards easier.
- Are there signs on your vehicles warning cyclists of the risks of pulling up on the nearside of the vehicle?
- Have you provided additional mirrors for your vehicles which can reduce (but not eliminate) the blind spot on the nearside of the vehicle?
- Consider fitting blind spot proximity sensors that can alert the driver if there is a cyclist (or pedestrian) in their blind spot.
- Consider fitting turn alert systems, which give a verbal, "Warning, vehicle turning left" audible warning, similar to the reversing alerts fitted on some vehicles (and can be combined with the blind spot proximity sensor).

Any enhanced vehicle features, as highlighted above, must be accompanied by the appropriate training for the drivers – they must know how to use them effectively and also their limitations (e.g. an audible warning might not be heard by a cyclist who is wearing headphones), and to not rely on them as a way to mitigate the risk.

Legal Vs safe

There can be a tendency for some operators of LGVs to base their risk management activities around compliance rather than on the basis of any assessment of the actual risk. You should never confuse what is legal with what is safe, and the drivers' hours and tachograph regulations, as well as the Law relating to the use of mobile telephones illustrate this. Complying with the Law is essentially meeting minimum standards and this is often not common or accepted current best practice.

Many operators are concerned that going over and above what is required by the Law will put them at a competitive disadvantage, but the direct and uninsured losses associated with collisions – the International Loss Control Institute state that for every £1 paid out through insurance there are £8-53 in uninsured losses, depending on the severity of the incident – mean that operators with a safer fleet will actually save money, which should be built into the overall P&L account. Not all work-related road safety initiatives incur a cost, for example changes to management and/or operational practices and procedures, but where they do then the reductions in the collision and claim rates are usually more than adequate to offset the cost of any initiative. The key here is to ensure that the initiative is effective, and this comes down to a combination of understanding the risks, so the appropriate interventions can be selected, and strong management to make sure that the intervention can be implemented consistently and effectively.

Training

Training is obviously something that has to be delivered, as part of the CPC requirements, but some operators go over and above this as part of their work-related road risk management programme. This could be delivering training via a third part or using internal driver trainers who are employed in this role on a full or part time basis, depending on the size of the operation.

There are some key things to consider when delivering training:

- Can the driver put the training into practice? Have you created a safe working environment such that drivers can drive safely without conflicting with operational metrics?
- Have you developed a strong on-road safety culture? Professional drivers tend to take the standard of their driving very seriously, but if you haven't developed a strong on-road safety culture the drivers may not see the need for continuous improvement, and are thus less likely to take any training messages seriously.
- Is any training based on the outcomes from risk assessments or post incident (collision or driver behaviour telemetry events) debriefs? If assumptions are made about the risks faced then any training is unlikely to be effective at reducing the collision and claim rates.

Whenever you are delivering CPC training make sure that this is fit for purpose and not simply a 'box ticking' exercise to satisfy the needs of the regulations. Look on this as an opportunity to deliver training that will make a real difference to the chances that a driver will be involved in a collision. When selecting a supplier, if you are not delivering this training in-house, look for evidence that other customers they have worked with have seen an improvement in their collision and claim rates following the training.

Recruitment and retention

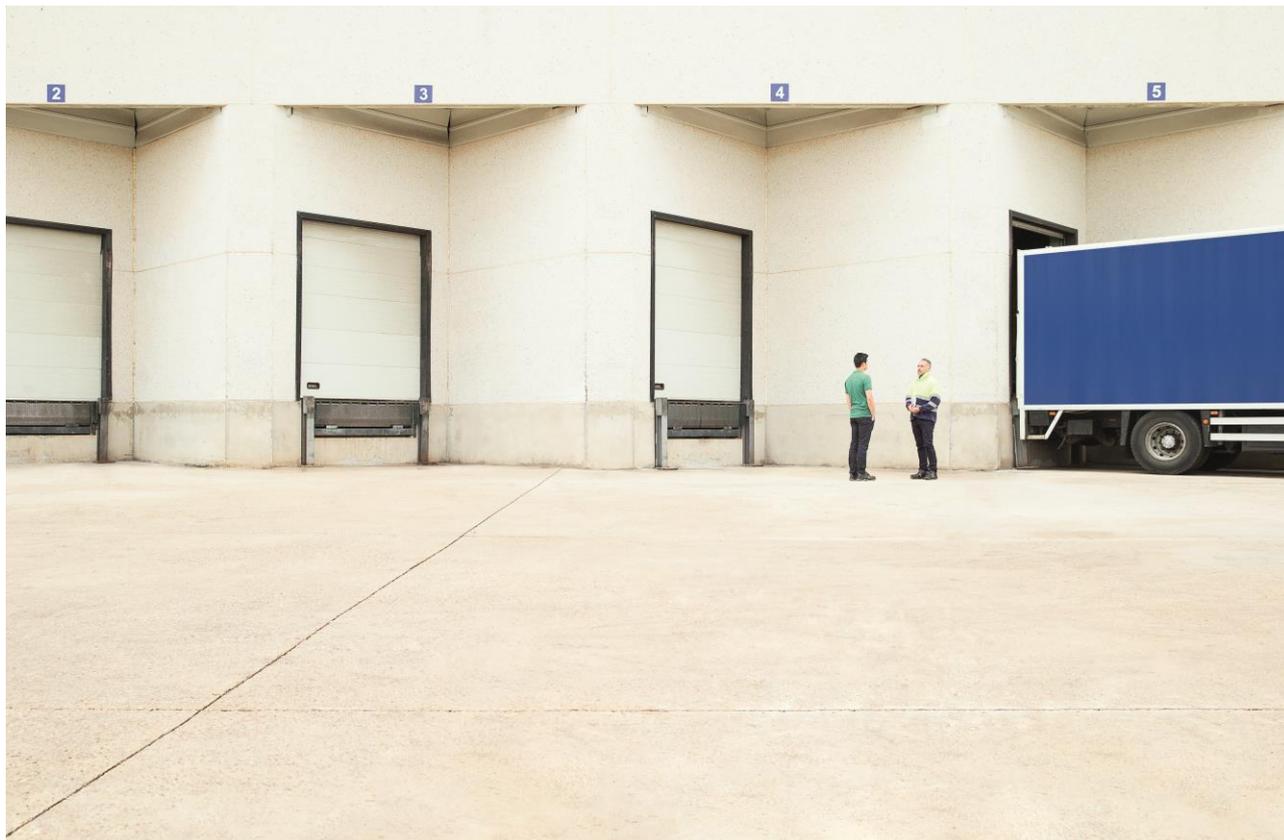
Having well trained and experienced drivers is obviously important in terms of minimising your collision and claim rate, but with continued driver shortages, increased costs associated with gaining a licence and little appetite from the younger generation to join the profession, this can present challenges to operators.

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There are a number of things that operators can do to help with this area, including enhanced benefits (such as providing free medicals and eyesight screening), improved salaries (funded through cost savings from improved collision and claim rates), helping internal staff train to become drivers, and engaging with local schools and colleges to raise interest in driving jobs.

Summary

Managing work-related road safety is not easy, but with strong leadership and effective management, as well as the traditional training approach, significant improvements are possible, which not only has a safety benefit but will also reduce the Total Cost of Risk, in terms of the direct and uninsured losses associated with every collision, which will ultimately improve the profitability of your organisation.



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