

This paper aims to provide a snapshot of current practices in fleet and occupational driving safety education and to point to the potential for further research and improvements in this area.

Research Methods

At the outset, the authors have extensive experience in developing and implementing fleet safety and road safety programs, as consultants and as program managers. In the interest of continually improving our knowledge of the field, we examine current literature, scan the internet and talk to other people working in the field.

Recently, we were commissioned by the ATSB to identify available resources to assist employers to conduct driver safety education programs. This entailed the activities described below.

We scanned the available sources of fleet driving safety education materials as well as general references on fleet safety practices. In doing so, State and Territory authorities and researchers were consulted in addition to a selection of private employers, insurers and brokers, and the internet.

Government, not for profit and private providers were consulted on the usage of their materials. Professional associations and insurance companies/brokers were also consulted. Organisations were chosen to represent the needs of large and small fleets, as well as city and rural needs, as well as those with established programs and those with relatively new interests in improving occupational driving safety.

We analysed the data collected and made an assessment of safety education needs as well as current practices, generally to improve fleet and occupational driving safety.

Since the project for the ATSB was completed a further analysis has been done on the data collected together with an additional literature review.

Survey of Fleet Safety Education Providers and Users

The initial aims of the survey were to scope the availability of suitable materials for use in fleet and occupational driving safety programs. It found that a variety of products, services and materials aiming to provide fleet safety education to employees.

It should be noted though that the term “educate” meant different things to different people, or had different emphases on aspects of driver safety improvement, depending on who was answering the question. Broadly, the driver safety education concept was mostly related to driver training or driver skill development. Some responded more generally, talking about organisational driving policies, fleet management policies, and occupational safety programs.

Organisations that produce materials or are in the process of producing materials were asked about these materials and the aims for their use. Again, most commercial suppliers provided products and services aiming to improve driver safety through improved knowledge and understanding of safe driving techniques. Other types of materials, often produced by motoring organisations and government road safety authorities, are general educational materials about road crash and injury risk factors that can be given to employees.

What Guidance is Provided

The Federal Office of Road Safety (now ATSB) in association with the National Safety Council of Australia (NSCA) produced a Fleet Safety Manual in 1995. It gives practical advice to enable a systematic approach to implementing a fleet safety program. The educative elements proscribed in the manual cover driver induction, driver training and driver education.

The National Occupational Health & Safety Commission (NOHSC) produced a report on the Evaluation of Road Transport OHS Prevention Initiatives in 1999. In it they cite some safety resources available to the road transport industry that might be useful for adaptation to light vehicle safety programs.

State WorkCover Authorities have generally not produced driver safety education materials, perhaps leaving this task for road safety agencies. However, the Victorian WorkCover “Safety Map” as a framework for a safety management system does provide a sound basis for applying safety planning and management to the driving task. “Safety map” was used by the Queensland Department of Transport to help with the development of its Workplace Fleet Safety Self Audit document. The South Australian WorkCover Authority has produced materials focused on assisting the road transport sector.

State road and transport authorities produce a range of materials covering road user risk factors and countermeasures. Apart from resources for heavy vehicle commercial driving, not a lot of educational resources designed specifically for occupational driving safety have been produced. The Queensland Department of Transport produced a Workplace Fleet Safety Self-Audit guide, to assist organisations to implement driver safety programs.

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority funded the development of the document “FleetSafe – improving driver and vehicle safety” by the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC). This document is now being used by many other Councils in New South Wales as well as the twelve SSROC Councils. It provides a helpful educational resource in that it educates about the safety management framework needed for any organisation and also provides guidance about project management issues to help organisations to establish best practice fleet safety.

VicRoads, having been a co-sponsor to the MUARC study, *Review of Best Practice Road Safety Initiatives in the Corporate and/or Business Environment*, is now developing resources for employer organisations in partnership with the Transport Accident Commission and the RACV. This project has developed three videos focusing on: development of a fleet/driver safety policy, selection of safe vehicles and on driver fatigue. These will be piloted with a sample of organisations.

The internet search revealed few organisational driving safety education resources. The US National Highways and Transport Safety Administration (NHTSA) have on their website, *Six Profitable Steps to Highway Safety*. This document includes sample safety policies on key road user safety factors, eg alcohol use and seat belts as well as seasonal messages to use in internal campaigns.

There is also a booklet produced by Health and Safety Executive in the United Kingdom, called, *Workplace Transport Safety: Guidelines for Employers*, 1995. This again is more of a policy guidelines document than an education resource, and is targeted at work premises rather than the wider issue of driving at work.

The Australian Driver Training Association (ADTA) advise organisations that are concerned with improving the safety of their fleets, that there are four levels of training or related things that they can do. At the first (novice) level drivers can be taught ‘car craft’. This is learning about how to operate a vehicle. The second level is ‘road craft’. At this level drivers can be taught how to follow road rules and use road and traffic facilities correctly. The third level is ‘risk awareness and hazard perception’. Here drivers are taught about crash risks and how to avoid crashes. The final level is simply ‘planning skills’. This is a primary prevention skill, for example, learning how to allow enough time and rest for a safe journey.

The Australian Fleet Managers Association (AfMA) provide information and seminars to their members. Some of these cover fleet safety topics. AfMA, supported by the ATSB, also encourage best practice through an annual fleet safety award scheme.

What Resources are Provided

The most prolific producer of driver education materials discovered in the study is Lumley General Insurance. Lumley has produced a range of *Superior Driving Techniques* videos and pamphlets and made these available to their members.

The American ‘Smith System’ is an off-the-shelf commercial driver safety skills product range. They offer courses, training manuals and self directed learning products. Smith System operates on the principles: *Aim high in steering, Keep your eyes moving, Make sure they see you, Get the big picture and Leave yourself an out.*

The Driving Edge is another product that is used by organisations to be used by individual drivers. It is CD-ROM or network based and allows individual employees to ‘log on’ and commence the educational device and go through the program modules at their own pace when convenient to them. The focus of The Driving Edge is on learning rules, driving techniques and driver knowledge (of stopping distances, for example.)

The Transport Accident Commission’s Drive Smart CD-ROM assists to increase driver knowledge and awareness of road environment/traffic hazard perception. This product was designed more for novice drivers than corporate drivers.

Then there are a number of driver training schools and facilities. These include Jim Murcott, John Bowe, DECA, HART, and many others.

A new product, The Driver Safety Awareness Program, recently developed by Susanne Haydon and Associates, focuses on enhancing understanding of the relevant corporate driving safety issues and assists with the development of a framework for low-risk driver strategies that can be put into practice. It, like the Fleet Safety Manual and Fleetsafe are management tools that can be used to advance an organisational driving safety program. However, unlike the Manuals, the Driver Safety Awareness Program is a training system.

Education resources typically used included videos, CD Roms, hard copy workbooks and policy and procedural documents, as well as software versions available on the internet. In general, the resources used are still skewed towards driver skill and technique. Sometimes these training programs are complemented by self- or supervisor assessment programs. Other resources used are developed to promote awareness of topical issues such as holiday driving, mobile phone use, or other issues arising from workplace committee discussions or data analysis. These usually take the form of posters, brochures and newsletters.

What Organisations are Doing

Organisations can be divided into three categories in terms of involvement in corporate driver safety programs. There are those with no programs in place, ones that have recently introduced programs or changed how they manage these programs, and there are organisations with well-established programs in place.

Some organisations do not have any driver education or driver safety programs in place, either claiming either that they don't have an accident problem or that they did not think it necessary once they check that the employees are licensed to drive or they gave no reason.

Organisations that only recently began to address fleet safety tended to be the ones that focused on driver skills training. Some organisations provide advanced driver training to their employees, citing the need to do so given that high performance vehicles are used by employees and their families. Some of organisations have negotiated with the training companies to focus the training more strongly on safety aspects and defensive versus advanced training.

Driver training appears to be widely used particularly in the corporate environment, and it therefore represents a significant component of spending by corporate organisations on driving safety. It is important to note that most organisations utilising driver training programs do not usually evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

Some organisations, noting the research and their own experience in fleet safety have moved away from driver skills training and are concentrating their efforts more on improved safety behaviour. These organisations have developed or adapted educational programs in accordance with their identified needs. These programs are often designed to meet their organisational cultures and policies, unique driving needs and conditions, and/or the safety issues defined through analysis of their internal crash data.

The organisations that have quite advanced fleet safety programs undertake policy communications activities to support a holistic climate of safety. In other words, safety of employees is a core value for the organisation. This provides a strong platform for safety education.

While road and transport safety authorities produce a great deal of road safety information materials, these resources are rarely used by organisations.

Reasons for this varied. Sometimes the information was not framed in such a way to be appropriate for occupational driving. Some felt that a road safety pamphlet, as a separate piece of information, would be ignored by employees if it was not integrated with a specific educational program, nor is seen as a communication from the management of organisation (ie their employer).

Moreover, the survey found that a one-size-fits-all set of materials would not be sufficient to meet all needs. Some organisations have special needs to do with the nature of the driving that is done by employees. Some use specially equipped vehicles, have special driving and riding conditions, and work patterns.

Some organisations have adapted the off-the-shelf materials and services to suit their particular needs or organisational cultures or identities. For example, AGL has reproduced Lumley training resources to include a message from the Chief Executive about the importance placed on safety as well as built up training resource materials based on their own vehicle crash factors. Australia Post has particular training needs related to riding motorcycles whilst delivering mail and has negotiated with its service provider to cover these aspects.

Discussion

Organisations with significant vehicle fleets may be seen as microcosms of the broader driving population, offering a ‘captive audience’ for driver safety education. Indeed it is estimated that work activities account for half of all Australian road travel.

The focus of our recent study was to determine the fleet safety educational resource gaps that could be addressed by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau and others. However, in consultations with a variety of organisations it became clear that there are other, perhaps more fundamental ways in which road safety agencies could assist organisations to improve employee road travel safety.

Increasingly, organisations are developing a pro-active approach to fleet safety. Commercial safety products and services are increasingly coming onto the market, enabling greater access to products and services for employers. However, the quality of these products and services vary; and organisations are often not in a good position to judge the quality and effectiveness of these products and services, but by trial and error.

There was little evidence of evaluation of the effectiveness of various measures employed. There may be evidence of a kind of “cargo cult” mentality where the provision of hands on and sometimes classroom based training on its own will solve the safety concerns. This approach may be achieving some useful outcomes, but optimal safety outcomes are likely to require a much greater focus on management systems than just on training and or education aimed at employee drivers.

The FORS/NSCA attempted to address this with the production of the *Fleet Safety Manual*. However, neither ATSB nor the NSCA have received much feedback or information on its use. Some of the organisations were aware of the existence of the document; but none indicated that it was used to guide their programs. A representative of NSCA suspects that the Manual is too simplistic for some larger, sophisticated organisations while too detailed for the smaller organisations.

In summary, taking a broader perspective, the following activities and services could be considered by those aiming to assist with work related driving advancement:

- Promotion of fleet safety to management
- Explanation of the best practice framework for fleet safety in varying organisations
- Statistical data to “sell” the benefits of fleet safety from risk management, OHS and other aspects
- Advice on how to implement fleet safety management systems
- Safe vehicle selection materials
- Easy-to-use driver, passenger and pedestrian behavioural change materials and systems
- Data collection and reporting systems

Conclusions and Recommendations

With over half of the new vehicles purchased in Australia being purchased for commercial purposes, and with the growing corporate interest in fleet safety, it is not surprising that Australian Government road safety agencies are focusing more on this opportunity to improve driver safety through occupational safety programs.

While development of resources is a useful way forward, it is recommended that government agencies adopt a strategic view and to use a planning approach working with organisations to develop practical resources and guidance references. The development and implementation of effective safety management systems backed by the right technical expertise are worthy of investing time and resources.

To date, there has been little more than a patchy, uneven or simplistic *fix-the-driver* approach to work related driving safety. We believe that best practice will embrace a holistic safety management approach

with an emphasis on management systems backed by a strong safety management culture. In turn, this organisational culture should influence individual and community attitudes as well reinforcing the public road safety initiatives by government agencies.

For industry, we recommend that road safety expertise is sourced and used in developing approaches to occupational driving safety.

For government, we recommend that the most helpful assistance is to:

- Work with industry and fund pilot studies to test the effectiveness of various types of work related driver safety interventions and safety management systems;
- Set and advise standards for the kinds of information that is available for industry to use in driver safety education and management education; and
- Assist with improving corporate managers' knowledge of road crash and injury factors and effective behavioural countermeasures.

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