Managing Your High Risk Drivers

Introducing the Essential Fleet Management Steps to Reduce Your Fleet Costs and Achieve Compliance
Introduction

Welcome to the fourth in our series of Fleet Management Help Guides – Managing Your High Risk Drivers

What constitutes a High Risk Driver?

Quite simply, it is someone who cannot always be relied upon to drive safely, sensibly or economically. Their driving behaviours may be volatile, they may drive too fast or take risks on the road, may be inexperienced or they may just be downright careless. Many factors can contribute towards a driver falling into the High Risk category, and here we will guide you through the principles of (a) recognising who your own culprits are, and (b) implementing measures to tackle the underlying issues.

A High Risk Driver is a High Cost Driver

Someone who takes risks when driving is of course more likely to be involved in an accident than their more sensible counterparts. That’s a matter of common sense. And we don’t need to remind you of the detrimental consequences – both financial and human – of a road traffic accident.

But even if they are lucky enough to somehow avoid being involved in accidents as a result of their poor behaviour, your High Risk Drivers are still costing you unnecessary money every time they are behind the wheel.

Speeding, erratic driving, heavy braking, over-revving…these all put excessive pressure on a vehicle and its fuel consumption, leading ultimately to premature mechanical wear and tear and increased fuel usage…both of which will cost you dearly, but both of which are completely avoidable. We’ll show you how.

Identifying your High Risk Drivers can be challenging…but with our help there are significant benefits to be had, and savings to be made.

Let’s get started

Some key elements of managing your High Risk Drivers:

- Identifying your high risk drivers.
- Employers’ responsibilities for drivers’ licences – what the law says.
- Speed limits for van drivers.
- Alcohol and drugs.
- Building an action plan.

We will take a detailed look at these areas one by one. By the end of this Guide you will know exactly what’s involved in each element of Managing your High Risk Drivers, what your responsibilities are and how to identify cost saving opportunities.

On-the-spot advice from FTA Van Excellence...

We have used extracts for this and other Help Guides from the “FTA Guide to Van Excellence”. The full guide addresses all subjects raised in these Help Guides, each covered to an exhaustive level of detail you would expect from FTA, and with valuable tips and advice throughout. For further information on the Van Excellence Programme, accompanying Guide, and the essential support that members receive, please visit www.vanexcellence.co.uk

Identifying your High Risk Drivers

Compiling a list of key stats about each driver will help you to spot in the first instance which driver(s) may present you with a higher than average level of risk:

- Driver’s age and duration of driving experience.  
  **RISK:** Young drivers (under 25) and those with limited driving experience.
- Mileage driven per annum.  
  **RISK:** Those who cover over 20,000 mile distances.
• MPG achieved in comparison to other drivers.  
  **RISK:** Higher than average MPG performance often points to poor driving habits.
• Number of points on licence.  
  **RISK:** If points are present, or historically have frequently occurred.
• Accident records.  
  **RISK:** Those who have had at-fault road accidents in the past, even minor.
• Number of fines/fixed penalties incurred.  
  **RISK:** Parking fines, speeding fines or other offences.
• Increased maintenance spend on allocated vehicle, especially on brakes and tyres.  
  **RISK:** Higher than average maintenance costs can be attributed to poor driving behaviours.
• Condition of the vehicle at disposal.  
  **RISK:** Denting, scratching, damaged equipment, poor interior condition.

Remember: Driver-related risk doesn’t only relate to poor driving habits…it can manifest in other ways:

• Driver fatigue.
• Weak journey planning.
• Consumption of drugs or alcohol.
• Lack of driving experience.
• Lack of understanding of allocated vehicle

It is important to understand exactly **WHY** a driver is presenting your company with increased risk, because only then can you understand **HOW** to solve the problem.

### Avoiding Driver Fatigue

You may suspect that a driver is putting himself at risk of fatigue by failing to take breaks when recommended or showing reluctance to stay overnight in the event of an excessively long working day.

#### Drivers’ hours rules and the Working Time Directive

48 hour maximum average working time per week

Normally calculated over a 17 week reference period, although this can be extended by a collective or workforce agreement. Individuals can opt out of the 48 hour average limit.

**Adequate rest**

The regulation does not specify minimum rest periods, but makes employers responsible for ensuring workers and others are safeguarded (see below).

**Health assessments**

Employees have the right to the offer of free health assessments before being assigned to night work at regular intervals. A night worker is someone who works at least 3 hours between 11pm and 6am – although these times may be varied by agreement.

**5.6 weeks paid annual leave**

Employers can stipulate when leave is taken and there is no legal entitlement to time off on bank holidays.

Note. Drivers that are not covered by EU drivers’ hours rules are still required to take adequate rest.

Click ‘More Info’ for a wealth of information to help you correctly set and manage your drivers’ hours.

#### Drivers Licences – What You Need to Know

Employer responsibilities for drivers’ licences: what the law says

Click ‘More Info’ for details of your obligations as an employer, and the legislation that underpins your legal requirements.

Click ‘More Info’ for a table of offences along with the likely outcomes of each.
Click ‘More Info’ to view a summary of the penalty codes used on Drivers Licences, and what they mean.

**More Info**

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**Speed Limits for Van Drivers**

Click ‘More Info’ for details of maximum speed limits, penalties for speeding and advice on educating/monitoring your drivers.

**More Info**

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**Alcohol and Drugs**

Click ‘More Info’ for everything you need to know about the effects of drugs and alcohol on driving, the legislation involved, the legal alcohol limits and the penalties for offenders.

**More Info**

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**Other areas to consider…**

**Use of Portable Equipment in the Vehicle**

Click ‘More Info’ for the legal issues of providing mobile equipment and recommendation for their use.

**More Info**

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**Action for Employers**

Click ‘More Info’ for a Link to an example of a mobile phone policy, legal issues of providing mobile equipment and recommendation for their use.

**More Info**

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**Driver Risk Profiling**

An increasing number of companies are turning to Driver Risk Profiling to formally assess the risks presented by each of their drivers. Using psychometric testing to assess levels of aggression, thrill-seeking tendencies, enjoyment of driving, hazard awareness and proneness to fatigue, you can build an accurate picture of a person’s driving ‘type’ and therefore establish their potential to be involved in an incident on the road.

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**TIP: Let technology help you…**

1. **Speed/RPM limiting solutions with Eco Recalibration**

In simple terms, eco recalibration is the technical remapping of a vehicle’s engine management electronics, resulting in greater controls over fuel consumption. Software is used to adjust the levels of fuel injected and waste gate settings, and can be combined with the installation of RPM and speed limiting technology.

**How can this help me manage my High Risk Drivers?**

- Eco recalibration reduces the damage that can so often be caused by the throttle-happy driver – they will have no choice but to lighten up that heavy right foot.
- Enforcing better driver behaviour by limiting RPMs and speed ultimately reduces the risk of accidents/incidents, therefore keeping drivers (and other road users) safer.
- Better driving leads to less vehicle wear and tear, and therefore lower maintenance costs.
- Many insurance companies will offer a reduction in premiums for recalibrated vehicles.
- CO2 emissions are significantly reduced, helping your company to contribute positively towards carbon footprint reduction.
- Eco recalibration can improve a vehicle’s fuel consumption by a massive 20%. Even the most cautious forecast anticipates a
10% saving in fuel per vehicle. Whichever way you look at it, there’s no denying this is a huge reduction on a typical company fuel bill.

**What to do...?**

It’s certainly worth some research – the facts and figures speak for themselves. There are many suppliers out there offering eco recalibration packages; if necessary FleetCheck can provide you with more information.

2. Vehicle Telematics

Using a Telematics – or vehicle tracking – solution is really the only way you can be confident that you know exactly how your drivers are using the vehicles you put them in charge of. The days of the sceptical ‘big brother watching’ scenario seem to be long gone; employees these days usually understand that budgets are stretched and therefore their activities need to be closely monitored (and those who express an unwillingness to be tracked are probably the culprits who NEED this level of discipline!)

**How can this help me manage my High Risk Drivers?**

A good telematics system will show you – instantly and in a very user-friendly way – which of your drivers are speeding, driving for excessive time periods and failing to choose optimum routes…all of which are key contributors towards their overall risk factors, and all of which are Costing You Money.

- Highlight instances of driver speeding.
- Monitor behaviour on the road, identifying excessive acceleration, braking and harsh steering.
- Highlight hours driven and identify potential driver fatigue.
- Clarify if breaks are taken after long periods of driving.
- Post accident investigation.
- Identify who is driving at any time, ensuring drivers receiving speeding prosecutions are identified and avoided where not legitimate.
- Provision to monitor high risk drivers once identified.

**What to do...?**

If you have not already done so, we would strongly recommend that you evaluate how Telematics could help your company. Guide 7 delves deeper into Telematics, looking at the solutions available and examining the costs versus the benefits. Download Guide 7 here:

[More Info]

That’s the hardest part over...you now know how to identify your High Risk Drivers and have identified the key areas to consider.

**Now it’s time to turn your attention to proactively managing these drivers (and ultimately eliminating the problem).**

You may be concerned that all of this sounds like an awful lot of work, but before you come to a conclusion, let’s look at the benefits of correctly managing your High Risk Drivers:

**Achievable Cost Savings:**

- **Driver training** – identifying high risk drivers can enable you to target driver training at those who will benefit most and the investment will pay dividends in reduced costs and improved safety.
- **Reduction in fuel costs** – changing the behaviour of your higher risk drivers can deliver immediate savings in fuel consumption.
- **Maintenance spend** – often your higher risk drivers will incur increased maintenance costs. Behaviours such as faster driving, harsh acceleration, and late braking will not only considerably increase fuel consumption, but also the frequency and costs of repairs.
- **Reduction in fines and penalties** – fines are avoidable, and whether the driver is recharged for them or not, processing them takes up valuable office time and can even increase your insurance premium and excess charges. In addition you could be exposed to substantial fines incurred by major failures in your duty of care.
• **Increased vehicle residual values** – whether a reduction in charge-back costs at the end of a Contract Hire agreement, or achieving a higher price at disposal, the savings can be significant.

• **Accident management** – a proactive approach to work-related road risks and an ability to demonstrate that you are reducing your road risks will deliver savings in your insurance premiums, especially if measurable from a reduction in road accidents.

**And not only will you save money…**

• **Driver safety** – you have a legal duty of care to safeguard the health and safety of your employees whilst they carry out their work. Proactive management of their behaviour and habits will demonstrate that you are fulfilling this duty, and will ultimately reduce the risk of a driver or other road user being involved in an accident.

So as you can see, there are a great many benefits to be had from implementing a Driver Management plan that focuses on your High Risk Drivers.

**Now it’s time to review and plan your actions…**

The tried-and-tested ‘plan, implement, monitor, review’ approach works perfectly here:

**Plan…**

• Ask all drivers to complete a Declaration upon joining the company (and annually thereafter) to confirm they are legal and fit to drive. Drivers should also inform their fleet operator of any changes.

**Click here** for an example of a Driver’s Declaration.

• Inspect drivers’ licences upon joining the company (and regularly thereafter) to check for points/disqualifications.

• Consider producing a Drivers’ Handbook that clearly sets out the company’s expectations and minimum standards of driving.

**Implement…**

• Communicate your expectations regarding driving behaviour and vehicle operation to all drivers. The most straightforward way of doing so is using a Drivers’ Handbook, which should include a declaration to be signed by each driver to confirm they understand and accept the conditions you have set out.

• Introduce a documented management system for your Grey Fleet drivers (those who use their own private vehicle on company business). Alarm bells should also ring if a driver is discovered using a private vehicle for business without providing insurance, maintenance and licence details.

• Introduce Technology - consider the benefits of Speed and Rev Limiting, with the guarantee of reduced fuel consumption

• Publish guidelines on the use of in-vehicle items, safety features AND portable equipment (including the legal and safe use of mobile phones and other communication devices.)

**Monitor…**

• Keep a close eye on vehicle MPG rates and use exception reporting for the most efficient results. Record and compare maintenance spend between similar vehicles, and investigate higher costs to establish links with high risk drivers.

• Make sure you have a robust means of recording and monitoring driver incidents and the costs involved – again, establishing any patterns or links to high risk drivers.

**Incident Management**

• The same goes for accidents – ensure they are properly logged (with all costs) for future reference.

• Keep track of drivers’ hours, and be sure they conform to regulations (see
information on Drivers’ Hours and Working Time Directive above).
• Re-check drivers’ licences at least once a year; more frequently for high risk drivers or those with penalty points.
• Telematics is a failsafe (and very simple) way of keeping track of driver behaviour…consider using one of the systems available as a platform for your driver management strategy.

Review…
• Conduct regular appraisals with your drivers, during which you can explore and discuss all of the data you have found from the ‘Monitor’ points above.
• Consider introducing incentives, and rewarding the best-performing drivers. Incentives and rewards do not have to be financial, but recognition/appreciation can work wonders in producing results and consistency.

Driver Training
As an employer you have a duty of care to ensure your staff are adequately trained in order to carry out their working activities, and a programme of driver training can be a valuable means of ensuring your risks are adequately managed. There are many types of driver training available – contact us to find out more.

Tackling High Risk drivers (and removing the risks they present) can only be successful through two-way communication. Armed with clear evidence of the issues (see ‘Monitor’), you can work with the drivers concerned to improve their performance through training and education, or in more serious cases, by using more formal methods such as technology (eg speed limiting systems, as mentioned earlier) or disciplinary procedures.

That brings us to the end of this Guide.

Before you move on, take a moment to review your actions and plan your next steps.

There’s no time like the present
Think about what you can improve upon as a result of what we’ve covered in this Guide, and take action NOW.
Many of the enhancements we’ve highlighted can be achieved with minimal effort – just a few simple changes could deliver very significant benefits.

Revisit your personal action planner
Click below to review the key areas for improvement that you identified in Guide 1’s Fleet HealthCheck, and review the outstanding areas highlighted within this Guide.

Download the next Guide
Go to HelpGuides, by clicking below, to view and download any or all of the Guides in the series.

Get some help
We are real people running fleets, just like you. We understand your challenges and we can help solve your issues. Our organisation exists to support companies like yours to run safe, compliant and cost effective fleets. Please talk to us if you have any questions, or simply want some advice on the best way forward.

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