

Beyond The Cab

The only safety management newsletter dedicated exclusively to addressing injury prevention and workers' compensation cost control for trucking companies.



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Time to Reflect (Safety?)

With 2002 fairly close to being nothing more than a memory, each of us have cause to reflect upon the year that is coming to a close and to consider questions such as, "What can I do to be a better spouse, parent, employee, boss, person of faith, etc.?" Certainly the end of a calendar year is not the only time we should think of self-improvement. However, there is something seemingly appropriate about starting fresh with the new year.

Similarly, with 2002 soon to be a fading image in your truck's review mirrors, it should give the safety director of each trucking company cause to reflect upon the past year and to consider questions such as "What can I do to improve upon the effectiveness of my company's safety efforts?"

However, for many safety directors, and trucking company owners, the first step in this reflection process should be to re-evaluate their understanding of the term "safety."

When asked to describe their company's safety program, many safety directors refer to the many administrative things that they do in the name of safety just to comply with Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. (drug testing, truck inspections, physical exams, logs, drivers files, hazmat training, etc. etc. etc. etc.)



Indeed the transportation industry (inclusive of the trucking industry) is likely the most heavily regulated industry with respect to "safety."

Although burdensome to say the least, these regulations have helped to achieve safer highways, fewer deaths from crashes involving trucks and increased awareness of highway safety. Additionally, these regulations have helped promote professionalism within the trucking industry.

However, the amount of safety-related regulation governing trucking companies has had an unintended (and unfortunate) result. Many trucking companies have become so consumed with complying with safety regulations that they have lost sight that there is more to safety than complying with safety-related regulations.

This body of thought is so pervasive throughout the trucking industry that many individuals and companies that market themselves as "safety consultants" for the trucking industry do nothing more than ensure compliance with regulations.

Because virtually all of the existing safety regulations that govern trucking companies are imposed as an attempt to prevent traffic accidents (and to prevent catastrophes in the event of traffic accidents), they have resulted in another unintended (and equally unfortunate) misconception. They have helped foster the notion that "safety in the trucking industry" and "highway safety" are one-in-the-same.

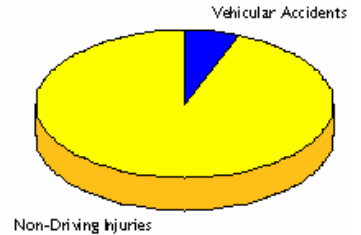
Although preventing of traffic accidents and complying with regulations are both extremely important elements of "safety" for every trucking company, they are only pieces of the puzzle.

So what is the piece of the puzzle that seemingly gets lost in the midst of trying to comply with regulations and prevent traffic accidents? Perhaps you can guess from the following statistics.

In 1999 a property and casualty insurance company conducted a study of nearly 1,000 injuries in the trucking industry. That study revealed that only 16% of the injuries resulted from motor vehicle accidents. Several years earlier a study conducted by the Trucking Research Institute revealed only 6% of the injuries in the trucking industry resulted from motor vehicle accidents.

Therefore, if your company's safety efforts are almost exclusively oriented toward compliance with safety regulations and the prevention of

motor vehicle accidents, you are failing to address 84-94% of the injuries that your drivers are likely to incur.



Considering both the direct and indirect costs associated with driver injuries, the degree to which the prevention of non-driving injuries is overlooked (or inadequately addressed) is nothing short of a *bad business decision*.

A company cannot (or at least should not) expect to prevent work-related injuries and lower workers' compensation costs without directing effort to achieving that goal. Hence in your reflection of 2002, ask yourself a few questions relating to injury prevention...

- Does my company's management have a sound understanding of the financial implications of employee injuries?
- Is my company giving "due" attention and effort to preventing non-driving injuries?
- What can my company do to improve its current efforts to prevent driver injuries

Safety programs that effectively address all tasks and activities associated with trucking will provide for greater injury reduction than those looking at only driving.

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The title of this newsletter alone, "Beyond the Cab," is intended to serve as a monthly reminder that the overwhelming majority of driver injuries don't occur while the driver is behind the wheel, but instead occur... "beyond the cab."