

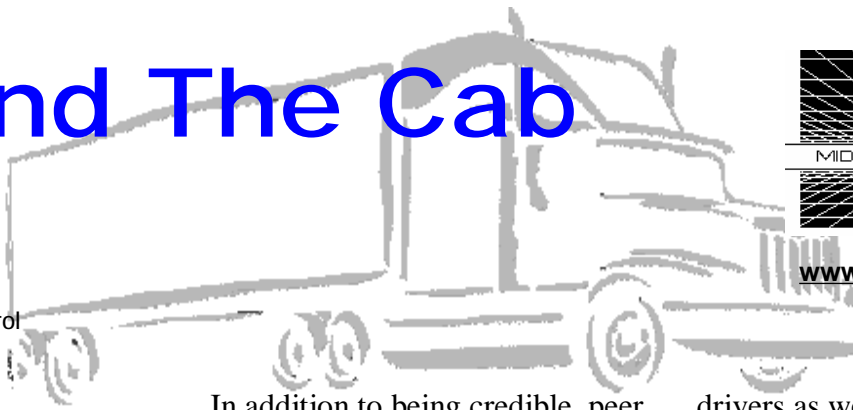
# Beyond The Cab

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



[www.midwesterninsurance.com](http://www.midwesterninsurance.com)

Issue 9, Volume 2004



## Deputizing Drivers

In the trucking industry and other industries alike, training is one of the key components of an effective safety program. In a broad context, safety training is not only intended to impart skills and knowledge. It's also intended to be an instrument of influence to shape employee attitudes and motivate specific (voluntary) behaviors. With that in mind, anything that can be done to improve the effectiveness of safety training deserves your full attention.

One thing that can be done to improve the effectiveness of safety training is to use "peer trainers." This simply refers to using key drivers to conduct safety-related training within your company. In effect, the use of peer trainers is akin to *deputizing* select drivers into active service within your safety program... *without the badge and sidearm.*

There are quite a few reasons why this makes sense. First, peer trainers are viewed by their fellow drivers as being credible. They've *been there and done that...* unlike many individuals who conduct safety training who've never even driven a truck, or have done so such a long time ago that they lack credibility in the eyes of drivers.

In addition to being credible, peer trainers are the ones closest to the problems, and therefore have a vested interest in identifying genuine solutions. Since they're exposed to the very same hazards as the rest of the drivers, they know first-hand the challenges to preventing injuries and are motivated by self-preservation to identify injury prevention strategies that actually work.

What about your most veteran drivers? Are they leaving your workforce without imparting the years of knowledge and wisdom that they've gained over the last several decades in the trucking industry? The use of peer trainers provides a mechanism for such veteran drivers to teach the upcoming generation of drivers some jewels of wisdom that have



helped keep them safe. A few may even be willing to share life-lessons from mistakes that they've made.

Yet another benefit to using peer trainers is that it promotes employee involvement (*which is key to making a lasting impact*). This isn't just referring to the involvement of the peer trainer. This employee involvement refers to the rest of the

drivers as well, since most people (drivers included) are willing to engage in open dialog with their peers, even if the topic is safety. What a dramatic change from the mental image of drivers reclined in metal folding chairs, counting the minutes until the safety meeting is over.

There are plenty of additional benefits, including the reality that the use of peer trainers helps keep the focus of safety meetings "on-topic." Because drivers have very limited face-time with the safety director (*whether it be by choice or by chance*), driver safety meetings occasionally take an entirely different road than that which was intended. Some simply erode into a gathering where drivers air their grievances. However, this is far less likely when the facilitator is a peer, someone who lacks the authority to address such concerns.

Add to the benefits listed above the fact that the use of peer trainers provides a creative way to provide recognition of high quality employees, which may not only aid in the retention of those high quality drivers, but may enhance employee morale overall.

By the way, could you think of something more productive to do, if you were not the one conducting the safety training?