

# 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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## Safety Perception Surveys

It may be hard to imagine life in the trucking industry before "safety management" was such an integral part of day-to-day operations. In fact, these days we assume that every trucking company, irrespective of size, has designated someone to oversee the company's safety efforts. Even within very small trucking companies, fulfilling that safety management role is largely a full-time undertaking.

For trucking companies, the extent to which safety management has become elevated to its current level can largely be attributed to the safety-related regulations imposed upon the trucking industry. These regulations have fairly equitably distributed their focus between "equipment safety" (truck, trailer and freight) and "driver safety" (education, training and behavior). And as a result of your response to those regulations, the trucking industry has become dramatically safer. However, there's only so much that we can expect regulations to accomplish.

If we want to continue to see such dramatic improvements within the trucking industry and within our own companies, we must strive for a better, more direct focus on the human element... the most dynamic of all the facets of safety. Purposeful, planned attempts to gauge and intervene in human behavior are "a must" if we expect to continue to improve.

One of the challenges we face however is the unavoidable reality that management simply can't physically observe the actions of drivers... at least the overwhelming majority of the time. You can't observe how well they implement



the safety training you've provided. You can't observe if they're cutting corners on safety. And you're removed from the observable behavior that reveals how they view the company's commitment to safety.

Particularly for trucking companies, the most valuable tool in the "safety toolbox" to overcome that challenge; and to purposefully address the human element and the effectiveness of our current efforts is the "safety perception survey."

A *safety perception survey* is a tool to obtain unbiased feedback from your drivers relative to various aspects of safety. It will provide valuable insight into how your drivers perceive risk; how they view their role relative to safety and how they view your effectiveness relative to safety management. Through the use of a well-designed safety perception survey you will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of your safety meetings, safety training and other aspects of your safety management system; and will identify both strengths and weaknesses in your current safety management efforts.

Although the survey questions can be designed to provide feedback relative to practically any area of safety, there are three core aspects for which you should seek results:

- management commitment to safety
- effectiveness of the safety system (programs, policies, practices)
- employee behavior

If you are committed to improving upon your efforts to address the human element of safety, this is knowledge that you simply must have.

Although safety perception surveys can be powerful tools for increasing the effectiveness of your company's safety management efforts, administering the survey and then failing to act upon the findings of the survey is an exercise in futility. Too often, company owners and managers receive negative feedback from surveys and dismiss the results as "hogwash" or simple employee contempt.

To realize the benefits of safety perception surveys, you must purpose to address the deficiencies and stress the strengths evidenced by the survey. After all... it's what you do with the results of the survey that will shape what employees do with safety training, safety meetings, and the various other safety management efforts that you use to influence safe behavior.

Obtaining meaningful data from surveys requires strategy and care in administration. Here a few keys to successfully administering the surveys:

- Ensure anonymity of employees
- Have as many employees participate as possible
- Be transparent about company motives
- Provide comfortable survey environments and strategic times

### MIA's Safety Perception Survey

Midwestern has developed a safety perception survey instrument for the trucking industry and detailed instructions to help ensure the integrity of results. This survey instrument is copyright-protected and limited to use by trucking companies who maintain workers' compensation coverage through Midwestern Insurance Alliance.

**Contact MIA's loss control staff TODAY to discuss administering a safety perception survey within your company. (502) 429-9990 or [losscontrol@miains.com](mailto:losscontrol@miains.com)**