



The Four Most Effective Ways to Improve Fleet Safety

Waiting for an accident?

In 2014, the Freight Transport Association reported 575,000 motorists were prosecuted for using a mobile handset or for being otherwise distracted whilst driving. Another study by GPSSystems.net revealed that underinflated tyres are a contributing factor in more than 20 percent of accidents. These kinds of accidents are especially tragic because they could have easily been avoided.

As a company whose business requires putting drivers out on the road, it's likely that steps are already in place to instil better safety practices. But are you doing enough? A variety of factors can influence safety, and there are measures you can take to increase the safety of your drivers.



An ounce of prevention

Accidents are costly; according to RoadSafe 2014, 150 company vehicles in Britain are involved in road traffic accidents. These crashes result in 14,000 deaths or serious injuries on average each year as well as 550,000 whiplash claims totaling £2 billion in a single year. This liability risk is unavoidable when you own vehicles, but minimising your exposure and protecting people and assets is critical. As a first measure, having basic safety policies and well-established procedures will protect you on paper, but how are they enforced? What about follow-through? A better safety policy is one that includes a system of checks and balances that help track and measure actual performance.



With advances in location-based technologies, you can increase the efficacy of your fleet safety program at every touch point. From the time a driver leaves the lot to the time they return to home base, safety has to be a top priority throughout the day. Having visibility into key safety metrics can help gauge your company's safety performance at all times.

The following are four ways to creating a safer fleet and minimising your risk exposure:

1. Decrease distracted driving

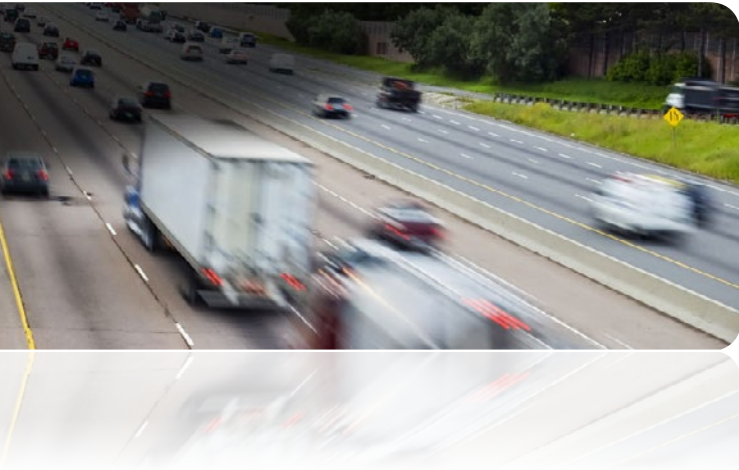
Driver distractions are behind 65 percent of near-crashes and 80 percent of crashes and as reported by FleetSafe. 83% of drivers think about something other than their driving when behind the wheel (such as home life or work). The report also highlights that 45% of drivers have lost concentration while performing standard tasks such as adjusting the radio, heating or satellite navigation system as well as 20% admit being so distracted by in-car gadgets that they have veered out of their lane. Furthermore, the Foundation for Traffic Safety “identified a number of disturbing trends”:



- Nearly 70 percent of drivers reported talking on cell phones while driving in the past 30 days
- About 25 percent admitted to typing text and email messages while driving
- About 35 percent reported reading text or email messages while driving

Distracted driving is a huge liability for businesses. For commercial drivers, being lost and using mobile devices are the top two activities that lead to distracted driving and increased risk for accidents. Consider these questions: Are you using a truck-specific navigation system that can keep drivers from getting lost and help them increase efficiency by limiting the number times they have to turn left or back up? Have you implemented a plan to regulate in-cab mobile phone usage?

Certain fleet management technology solutions can help reduce distracted driving by providing turn-by-turn directions with real-time road information. A comprehensive fleet management solution with commercial GPS mapping capabilities should include information such as approved roads for trucks, scheduled road closures, low-bridge clearances and customised approaches and entrances to yards and buildings for deliveries. Your solution should also include text-to-speech communication to ensure your drivers are keeping their eyes on the road.



Both FleetSafe and RoadSafe say the best action employers can take to curb mobile phone use while driving is to implement a zero-tolerance use policy. However, realistically, this isn't something that can be easily enforced or tracked. So, to get a better handle on cell phone usage, consider using advanced fleet management software that allows companies to set up a system where mobile devices are automatically disabled while the vehicle is in use.

The peace of mind of knowing that your drivers are engaged with the road and not their phones, tablets or laptops when driving is the first and most important step toward improved safety.

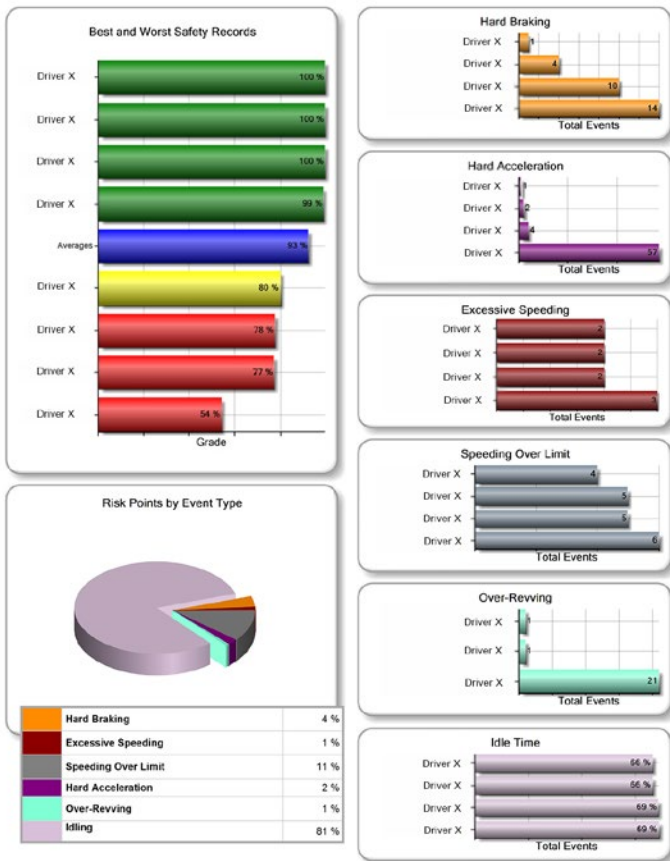
2. Provide driver coaching

Training is great to help establish safety for your fleet, but bad habits can return when drivers are unattended on the road. Managing driver behaviour in real time is imperative to ensuring that poor driving habits are addressed and eliminated. Empowering drivers with a real-time snapshot of their day and following it up with best practices and recommendations in the moment builds a safer fleet while reducing fuel and maintenance costs.

3. Reward safe drivers

Once your safety policies are in place and you start to see improvements in driver behaviour, reinforce the behaviour with a reward program. A solution that features a Driver Scorecard (such as the one offered with Telogis Fleet Pro) measures KPIs and safe driving metrics accurately, powering a reward program that's commensurate with your company goals for safety. Telematics systems can provide visibility into activities such as: speeding above the posted speed limit, hard braking and acceleration and even seat belt usage – failure to wear a seat belt contributes to more fatalities than any other single traffic safety related behaviour. Consider focusing your reward program on a different safety metric every week.

Fleet: Active 05/09/2013 to 05/09/2013 (1 days)

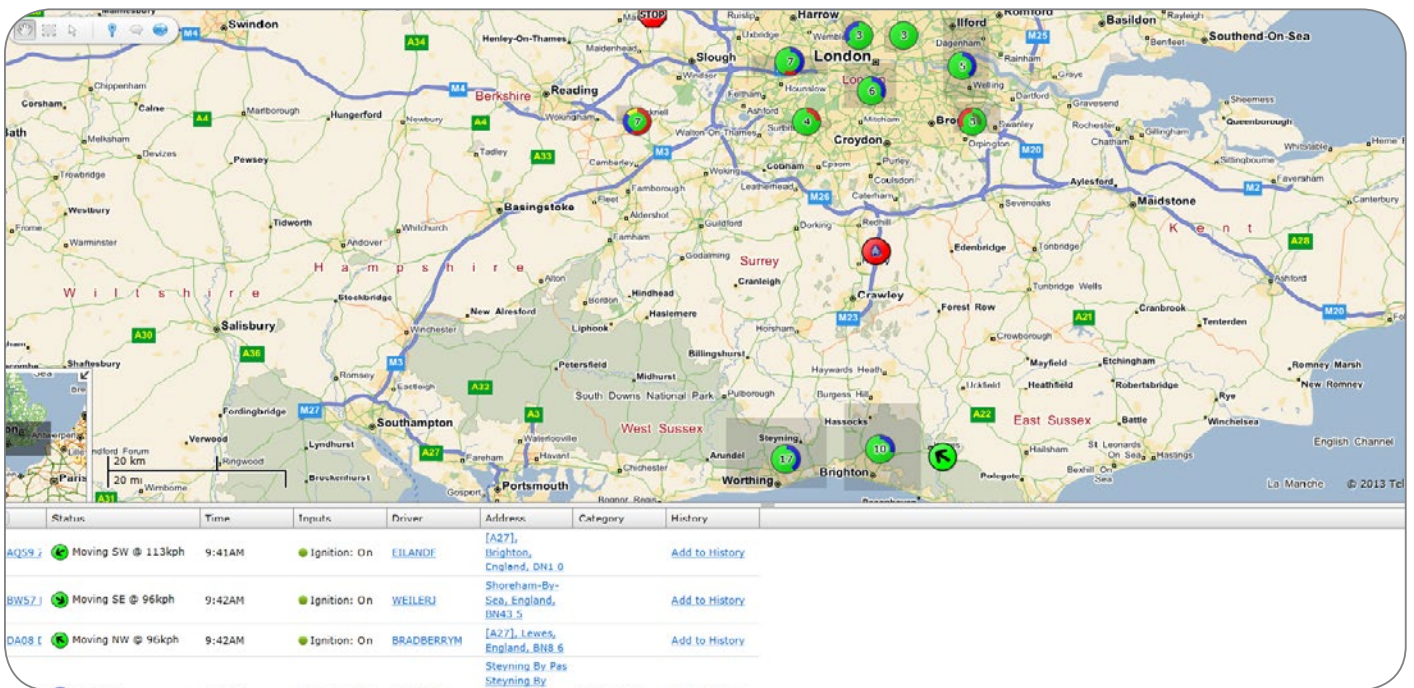


You can even encourage some friendly competition within your fleet by posting the results of the driver scorecards. Using the carrot-instead-of-the-stick approach to coach bottom performers encourages improvement and rewards the top safety performers.

Healthy competition can lead to safer driving efforts across the team and builds good driving habits going forward. Also be sure to build these safe driving metrics into driver performance reviews to instil a consistent culture of safety throughout your organisation.

4. Ensure Regular Vehicle Maintenance

Finally, keeping vehicles on the road and running smoothly can prevent breakdowns and accidents. Cutting costs by skipping recommended maintenance stops may save in the short term, but it will most certainly cost you in the long term. Long term liability goes up and safety goes down when you stop doing regular maintenance on your vehicles. The vehicle downtime from accidents and breakdowns is also a lot longer than it is from routine maintenance, hurting your bottom line.



Following are some key maintenance areas that impact fleet safety:

- Underinflated tyres
- Low levels of oil
- Worn brakes
- Loose bolts

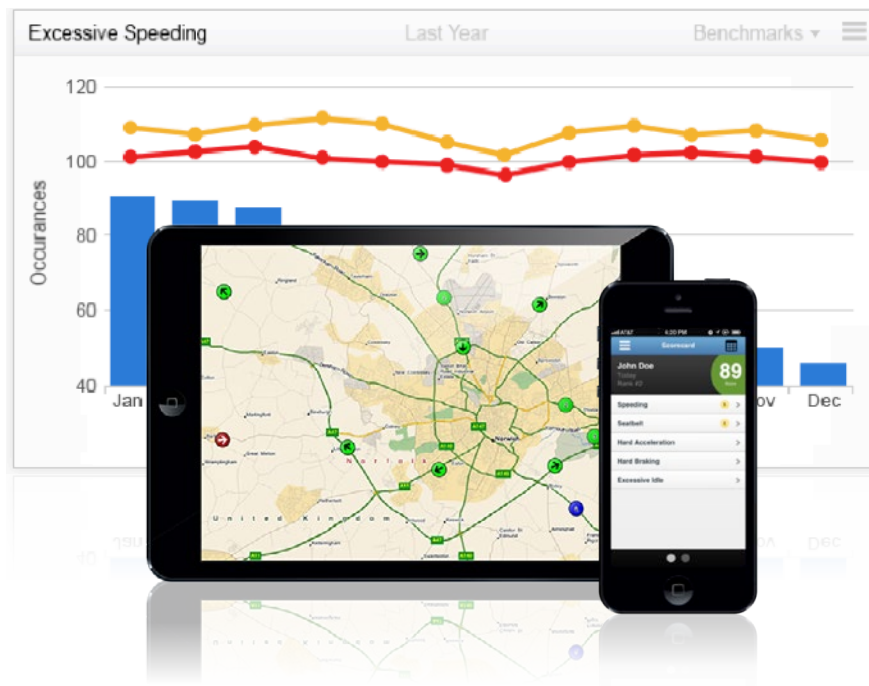
Underinflated tyres decrease vehicle manoeuvrability, raise internal tyre air temperature and increase rolling resistance. These effects lead to a higher risk of accidents. Engines with low levels of oil present another significant potential accident risk – especially on dual carriageways and motorways – as they are prone to seizing. Worn brakes make slowing and stopping more difficult and parts that aren't bolted down tightly present huge hazards to your drivers and other vehicles on the road.



What are some ways to ensure a consistent servicing schedule to lower accident risk? Using a commercial telematics solution keeps vehicle servicing on schedule with automated alerts based on predetermined factors such as mileage intervals. This solution is often available directly through the truck manufacturers at the point of purchase in order to provide a deeper level of engine diagnostics such as low tyre pressure, oil-life remaining and diagnostic trouble codes. When pre and post trip driver vehicle inspection reports (DVIRs) are needed, improve compliance with an integrated telematics and mobile solution that sends automatic confirmation when reports are completed. Fleet managers can do more to ensure vehicles are in the best shape on the road and ultimately improve fleet safety.

Take your time

Safety takes time to implement. It's more than just telling your drivers to drive safely - it's all part of a culture of consistency and encouragement. But it can be changed, and software solutions made specifically for commercial vehicles ensure safe driving and preventive maintenance initiatives are easier to implement and more effective than ever before.



About Telogis

Telogis provides a cloud-based location intelligence software platform for companies that require route optimisation, real-time work order management, commercial navigation, telematics and mobile integration services for their mobile workforces.

Telogis is dedicated to enhancing the value of its customers' businesses through intelligent integration of location technology, information and services. Telogis was established in 2001 and is headquartered in Aliso Viejo, California, with offices in Europe and Latin America as well as development centers in Austin, Texas; Toronto; and Christchurch, New Zealand. Telogis' products and services are used and distributed in more than 100 countries worldwide. To learn more about Telogis, visit www.telogis.com.au or call: +61 2 8860 6452.