

Guideline to Determine the Preventability of Accidents

Soon after your accident data is collected, a determination should be made to whether the accident was a "preventable accident" on the part of the organization's driver. The responsibility of this determination should be handled by the accident review board.

Accident Review Board members

The function of the accident review board is to form an opinion about an accident's preventability. To do this, the board members should represent all departments directly involved in the safety program:

- A representative from the safety department, to serve as chairperson, or someone who is familiar with accident prevention principles, safety supervision, and company safety policies and practices.
- A representative from the fleet department, familiar with operating rules, schedules, routes, speed limits and related subjects.
- A representative from the maintenance department, familiar with company vehicle's mechanical abilities and maintenance policies.
- Two drivers, familiar with traffic conditions and job requirements and hazards.

An odd number of members is needed to break a tie vote. The chairperson usually does not have a vote, but acts as overseer, keeps order and directs the meeting.

Committee Procedures

The chairperson of the board presents the facts about each accident under review. Accidents are referred to by a file number only and the driver's name should never be mentioned, nor should the driver appear in person before the board. The driver is represented by data on the accident report and other factual information.

The accident facts are presented through the following documentation:

- Driver's accident report.
- Company investigation reports.
- Police investigation reports.
- Insurance company investigation reports.

- Witness statements.
- Diagrams, photographs, and other evidence.

After presenting the facts, the chairperson should guide the discussion. The only question before the board is, "Could the driver have reasonably prevented this accident?"

Definition: A Preventable Accident is...."any accident involving a company vehicle that results in property damage or personal injury in which the driver in question failed to exercise every reasonable precaution to prevent the accident. This is regardless of who was injured, what property was damaged, the extent of injury or damage, or where the accident occurred."

The decisions of the accident review board should not be taken lightly. When a particular accident has been declared preventable or non-preventable, a precedent may be set.

Voting is done by secret ballot. Members simply write preventable or non-preventable on slips of paper and return them to the chairperson for counting. The driver's supervisor should inform the driver in writing of the board's decision. If the accident was judged preventable, the reasons should be given. A copy of the decision should be placed in the driver's personnel file or in the driver's qualification (DQ) file. Depending on your company policy, a copy may be given to the driver's immediate supervisor or union official.

Analysis

Analysis of accidents can be narrowly focused - one accident at a time, or broadly focused - entire fleet experience. The following is a guide to performing both types of analysis.

Individual Accident

Proper accident analysis involves the gathering of facts, arranging them in a usable format, and analyzing what transpired. A properly developed accident reporting and recording system will allow you to determine not only "primary" causes of accidents but also "contributing" causes which might be otherwise overlooked.

The investigation of each accident should not merely seek the specific act which was involved, but should go further into the conditions responsible to avoid the problems in the future. The investigation must include areas such as:

- Checking the driver's record for similar occurrences, length of service, and indications of poor attitude or lack of skill.
- Questioning whether a proper job of selection was done, whether training was adequate,

and if the driver was properly supervised.

- Determining if there were previous indications which should have warned of an impending accident.
- Evaluating if scheduling or routing could be improved.
- Ascertain if there was any indication of improper maintenance procedures or if a equipment deficiency was involved.
- Evaluating any conditions related to the vehicle's cargo.

The information derived from the accident analysis should be used constructively to educate employees or change procedures in an effort to prevent future occurrences.

Fleet Experience

Analysis is used to show changes from one year (or part of the year) to the next. The change might be in the number or severity of accidents or in the costs associated with accidents. Accident rate formulas that take into consideration variations in fleet size, type, and driving exposure should be used. Through analysis you can monitor the progress of your fleet safety program and use the resulting data in management reports.

There are several formulas that can give you an overview of the changes in your fleet's accident experience. These formulas are in wide use in business and industry and give you the opportunity to compare your fleet against industry accident rates or another fleet's rates. Most importantly, monitor your fleet rates over time to gauge your fleet safety program.

Fleet Formulas

Vehicle Accident Frequency Per 1,000,000 Miles. This formula is commonly used to compute frequency per 1,000,000 miles driven by a company's fleet over a year's time:

$$\frac{\text{Annual Number of Accidents} \times 1,000,000}{\text{Annual Miles Driven}} = \text{Rate}$$

Make certain all accidents for the time period, property damage only, injury, and fatality, are given in the Annual Number of Accidents figure.

Rates for portions of a year, such as quarters or months, can be calculated by adjusting annual formulas as shown in this example:

Exhibit #V-3.1

$$\frac{\text{Actual Number of Accidents for Time Period} \times 1,000,000}{\text{Actual Miles Driven During the Time Period}} = \text{Rate}$$

Accident Rate Per Driver can tell you if the fleet safety program is having a positive influence on employees' driving skills and attitudes:

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Accidents}}{\text{Number of Drivers}} = \text{Rate}$$

Accident Frequency Per Work hour. For fleets having considerable exposure but less mileage, such as local delivery or occupational fleets, formulas based on hours of service may be more useful:

$$\frac{\text{Total Number of Accidents}}{\text{Total Work hours of Drivers}} = \text{Rate}$$

Vehicle Accident-Loss Rate is figured by dividing the total dollar losses (all direct and indirect accident costs) for vehicle accidents by the company's gross revenues for the year (or quarter or month):

$$\frac{\text{Annual Dollar Losses from Vehicle Accidents}}{\text{Annual Gross Revenue}} = \text{Rate}$$

Vehicle Maintenance Cost per Mile rates can tell you, among other things, if a new vehicle inspection and maintenance program is effectively reducing operating costs. The rate is computed using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total Maintenance Cost}}{\text{Total Vehicle Miles}} = \text{Rate}$$

Maintenance Cost per Mile by Vehicle Type. This formula is used to show costs per vehicle type, such as vans versus automobiles:

$$\frac{\text{Total Maintenance Cost for Vehicle Type}}{\text{Total Miles by Vehicle Type}} = \text{Rate}$$

Maintenance Cost per Mile by Driver formulas can be used to compute maintenance cost rates for individual drivers:

$$\frac{\text{Total Maintenance Cost for Driver}}{\text{Total Miles by Driver}} = \text{Rate}$$