

EQUIPMENT INDUCTION AND TRAINING

Crashes where drivers have been killed or injured because they were driving an unfamiliar vehicle are far too common and so easily avoided. A new truck driver may have years of experience, but being put in charge of equipment they are not familiar with, without the proper training and induction, can have disastrous consequences.

While most workplaces understand the importance of a new driver induction, many underestimate the need to induct employees on the equipment they will be using. A typical workplace induction will cover the basics that seasoned employees take for granted such as what the shifts are, what's required when taking holidays or time off sick, safety requirements and hazards on site. However, a more comprehensive induction needs to cover the equipment a driver will be using.

Understanding what types of equipment a new truck driver has used in the past and how this differs to the equipment they will be using is also essential. For example, if a driver with experience driving a truck and trailer is given a semi or quad to drive, the way these trucks handle will vary. Training should be given on how these trucks perform differently and as such, how they need to be driven differently.

Another example is a cab-over driver being given a bonneted truck. These have different gearboxes to contend with so this needs to be a key point in the induction. If a driver is not given the proper training, even minor things such as where the wipers are and how to open the fuel flap, can become major issues if drivers don't know where the controls of the vehicle are.

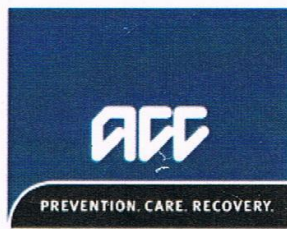
Training and inductions should not

only be carried out when a new driver starts. Anytime new equipment is introduced to a workplace, there should be formal training conducted by a qualified trainer. The tools should not be operational until training has been given and a list is compiled of all those people who attended the training.

It is the obligation of the employer to ensure that all people under their control are safe. This is also a legal requirement under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, Section 16. This requires any person in control of a workplace takes all practicable steps to ensure that no hazard in the workplace harms people. This includes the use of tools and equipment where a person has not been trained to operate them safely and has the potential to hurt themselves or others.

Workplaces should be vigilant in ensuring they have policies around induction and training that covers their equipment, from ladders to hand tools. By doing this, staff will receive the proper training and induction to help reduce accidents in the workplace, and employers will meet their obligations under the requirements of the Health and Safety Employment Act.

For more information and videos about injury prevention in the road transport industry visit acc.co.nz/roadtransport



Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

HANDS-FREE CALLING - HOW WELL PREPARED ARE YOU, REALLY?

Mobile phone communication is a daily reality for most businesses including on-the-go in vehicles. There are a range of devices to assist this and the uptake of them since the driver law change in November 2009 has been universal. However, many companies may currently be exposed to a prosecution by the Department of Labour if one of their employees is involved in a vehicle incident caused by them using a mobile phone. Even with a Bluetooth device in use, if the mobile phone is handled at all, this is in breach of the Law. Some companies have a policy forbidding any phone use by a driver – even such a policy may prove to be inadequate protection for a company against a prosecution under Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) regulations.

So what's the issue here? Human Nature being what it is, a particular set of circumstances may cause a driver when taking a call to handle their phone, resulting in a tragic outcome.

What does the Law require of an Employer?

A paraphrased version essentially says that all employers have a "Duty of Care" towards all their employees, at all times, to make all reasonable provision to ensure a safe workplace environment. This of course includes a vehicle.

In court it may be established that it is not unreasonable to invest a few hundred dollars in a car-kit to provide hands-free calling of a quality such that drivers will always use it. This may well be measured against the tens-of-thousands invested in a vehicle and hundreds in a phone or other device and deemed to be a small additional price to pay versus accident, injury or death.

What does the (Nov. 1st 2009) Law state?

A driver may push buttons

infrequently if the phone is secured in a cradle or holder.

A fully installed (hard-wired) car-kit with a cradle to secure the mobile phone, further mitigates the company's liability with regards "duty of care". The cradle also provides connection to an aerial outside the vehicle for a stronger signal.

The productivity story – why would you not?

A good quality car-kit solution enables a driver to make and receive calls with ease during what may otherwise be less productive time – often for longer periods in a day. Higher-end solutions now are fully voice controlled and completely hands-free. They read out loud emails and txt messages, record a message or conversation, assist navigation and even provide safer heads-up music selection.

What about vehicles that already have Bluetooth in their stereo head-units?

Since these have been available, the experience of users has been mixed. Some find that too often they do not produce satisfactory audio quality for the caller (not in the vehicle) to hear with ease, for others their mobile phones won't connect with them. This may result in drivers not using this Bluetooth, handling their mobile phone which increases risk or that driver being out of contact which could reduce productivity.

Point to Point Technology NZ distribute the BURY range of in-vehicle hands-free solutions which are available from Telecom, Vodafone, TelstraClear business account managers and thru most Telco retail locations. They are committed to assisting safer road usage in New Zealand.

