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Updating Your Fleet Safety Program

Municipalities have a unique exposure to fleet-related claims, as drivers can range from employees who occasionally run errands, to personnel who operate a vehicle all day long. Many think of fleet safety as the prevention of damage to vehicles, but claims can have a devastating impact on so much more. A lack of fleet safety can result in property damage, injury or death, public relations nightmares, and more.

Putting together an effective fleet safety program or reviewing and updating the one already in place, is critical to employee and public safety. Here are some key elements that should be considered:

Management Buy-In: Managers and Supervisors must understand the need for driver control, how fleet safety effects their operations, and the importance of promoting and enforcing the program.

Strong Hiring Practices: Requiring a motor vehicle driver abstract from any new potential employee prior to hiring them gives a snap shot of driving history and can highlight areas that a potential employee can improve before driving your vehicles.

Regular Driver Checks: We always recommend that abstracts be pulled for all employees, regardless of potential amount of driving, once per year. This will allow you to check to see if a license is valid and active and take action if an employee is not allowed to drive, such as reassigning duties. It also allows you to have a discussion with an employee that is showing a poor record about your organization's expectations when the employee operates your vehicles.

Sufficient Training: Regardless of experience, all drivers are required to operate vehicles in Alberta in many different types of weather and road conditions. We can all use additional training to ensure that our skills are up to date. Training can include online courses or classroom instruction.

When putting together or reviewing your fleet safety program, answer the following questions to provide guidance:

- Was the policy established with input from key stakeholders, including employees?
- Has the program been communicated to all employees?
- Do employees receive regular reminders about safety practices?
- Is there buy-in from all management?
- Is the policy uniformly enforced?
- Is it time for an update?

2510 Sparrow Drive
Nisku, Alberta T9E 8N5

OFFICE: 780.955.3639
FAX: 780.955.3615
RMAAlberta.com

Lastly, with winter approaching here are some points to help ensure the safe operation of a vehicle:

- Clear off the snow and ice before driving. If snow has fallen since your car was parked, take the time to thoroughly brush it off the vehicle--including the roof--and scrape any ice from the windows. "Peephole driving" through a small, cleared spot on your windshield reduces your visibility and is very dangerous.
- We always recommend the use of snow tires throughout the Province regardless of geographical location.
- In the event of a winter incident on the roadways, it's always a good idea to have an emergency kit on-hand – these can be purchased from most local hardware stores.
- Allow longer braking distances. Plan on starting your braking sooner than you normally would in dry conditions to give yourself extra room and use more gentle pressure on the brake pedal.
- Be extra wary of other motorists. They may not be driving as cautiously as you, so leave extra space, avoid distractions, and be predictable. 28% of rear end collisions are due to following too close.

There are plenty of options when it comes to driver safety. Start by assessing your current program and have an idea of what you want to accomplish.

We are always here to help. Please contact our office if you have any questions or need additional information regarding fleet safety.

For enquiries, please contact:

Dayna Johnson
Client Relations Manager
780-955-8408
dayna@RMAinsurance.com

John Hackwell
Risk Advisor
780-955-4078
johnh@RMAinsurance.com

Darcy Hale
Risk Advisor
780-955-8406
darcy@RMAinsurance.com

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