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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 much more. A lack of fleet safety can result in property damage, reputational harm, personal injury, or even death.

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

- **Management Buy-In:** Managers and supervisors must understand the need for controls, how fleet safety affects their operations, and the importance of promoting and enforcing the program.
- **Strong Hiring Practices:** Requiring an abstract from any new potential employee prior to hiring gives a snap shot of driving history and can highlight areas that a potential employee can improve before driving your vehicles.
- **Regular Driver Checks:** Abstracts should be pulled for all employees, regardless of potential amount of driving, once per year. This will allow you to check to see if a licence is active and take action if an employee is not allowed to drive.
- **Sufficient Training:** Regardless of experience, all drivers are required to operate vehicles in Alberta in many different types of weather and road conditions. All drivers can benefit from additional training to ensure that necessary skills are up to date. Training can include online courses or classroom instruction.

When putting together or reviewing your fleet safety program, asking the following questions can help 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?

With winter in full swing, there are some points to consider that will 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

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scrape any ice from the windows. "Peephole driving" through a small, cleared spot on your windshield reduces your visibility and is very dangerous.

- It is always recommended to use 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. Approximately 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.

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