

# White Paper

Managing Fleet Safety:  
Your Obligations, Options & Opportunities

# Managing Fleet Safety: Your Obligations, Options & Opportunities

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When it comes to managing the safety of your mobile workforce it often surprises business owners and managers just how much control and influence can be gained over the safety of staff in vehicles.

Often people are not aware of the extent of their obligations and how simple it can be to avoid unnecessary risk.

In the past, the best an employer could do was to provide a safe, well maintained vehicle and send drivers off with a “take care out there” hoping for the best. Nowadays, advances in technology, driver training, driver aids and safety equipment has given employers a range of affordable tools to improve safety on the road.

Nowadays, factory-standard features have made vehicles easier and safer to drive, but how can you build on that and why should you? We'll tackle the latter question first.

## Why should you invest in fleet safety?

Aside from the obvious moral and ethical reasons, there are legal and financial benefits and the opportunity to reduce your environmental impact.

According to the Workplace Health & Safety Act 2011, to properly manage exposure to risks, you must:

- identify workplace hazards
- determine who might be harmed, and how
- decide on control measures
- put controls in place
- review the controls regularly

Since 2011, the vehicle has been recognised under the act, as a workplace (“Vehicle as a Workplace”) so the above points apply to your mobile workforce. Failure to identify and control those hazards, risks heavy fines and even imprisonment. This not only applies to directors but to anyone found responsible for neglect, within the chain of responsibility.

Aside from legal requirements, an investment in fleet safety provides a surprisingly obvious return on investment. The implementation of a fleet management system such as simTRAC GPS Fleet Management is an obvious display of due diligence when it comes to fleet and staff safety.

By knowing your employee's location and having access to detailed alerts and reports on how the vehicles are being used you'll meet the majority of your legal requirements. Additionally, you'll see significant reductions in fuel use, wear & tear and timesheet discrepancies. It all equates to increased productivity, improved customer service and brand reputation.

By reducing unnecessary mileage, harsh vehicle use, speeding and idling, you'll be doing the environment a favour.

## Managing fleet safety

Next, we look at what steps you can take to meet both moral and legal obligations and to benefit from the returns.

It starts with an audit of your existing fleet to identify vehicles that need to be replaced in order of priority. When purchasing new vehicles, be mindful of choosing vehicles offering the highest levels of protection and driver safety aids. The easiest way to identify the overall safety of a vehicle is by a recognised safety rating (such as [ANCAP](#) in Australasia).

Typically anything with a rating of 4 or 5 stars is going to provide drivers with a reasonable level of safety. Consider leaving anything with 3 or less stars off your shopping list.

Depending on where the vehicles operate and the type of work drivers are doing, it's essential to consider what other safety equipment or driver aids the vehicle needs.

Additional safety equipment to consider may include a:

- first aid kit
- fire extinguisher
- vehicle with 4WD
- satellite phone
- duress button
- roll bars
- a snake-bite kit...

Ensure vehicles are well maintained and regularly inspected. There are a number of ways to manage this. From basic calendars, spreadsheets and paper-based systems to more advanced such as mobile apps, desktop software, online software, outsourcing to fleet management companies or simply use the Maintenance Manager in [simTRAC](#).

Don't leave vehicle inspections solely to the drivers. Enforce a policy of pre-start safety inspections that way you'll begin to share responsibility with your team. Remember it must have control measures, so consider using something like simPRO Software's [eForms](#) to control those measures.

Once you've provided a safe, well maintained vehicle, we're onto the biggest risk to driver safety... The driver.

## Driver monitoring

You can provide the safest vehicle available but if the driver is a lead-foot, throwing the vehicle into corners, stomping on the brakes, using unsafe routes and exceeding safe driving hours, the likelihood of an accident is drastically increased. Short of putting a manager in the seat beside each employee, how do you monitor driver behaviour and how do you correct poor behaviour?

Creating a *Driver Safety Culture* is much easier when you have a fleet management system. It's the next best thing to having a manager in the vehicle. Most good systems will give you regular updates of the vehicle's location and status.

Monitored and reportable stats should at least include:

- driving
- parked
- idling
- direction
- speed
- the ability to set up alerts and reports.

Systems such as simTRAC include a fully integrated Maintenance Manager. The hardware has built-in sensors for harsh braking, cornering and acceleration, as well as events like roll-over. Good quality hardware will allow the addition of other inputs, such as Panic/Duress Button, Driver ID Tag Readers, 4WD/Seatbelt/Handbrake Sensors etc.

Now what to do with all this data? Essentially, the point of all this is to be able to reward your best drivers and to educate the rest. This carrot and stick approach is what creates a Safety Culture.

You don't need to sit in front of a PC or tablet all day to monitor driver behaviour. Set-up alerts for speeding and harsh vehicle use and set a fairly high tolerance for these, so rather than being bombarded with notifications you only get instant notification of more extreme violations.

These events are the ones that require immediate action. In terms of analysing reports, for a deeper understanding, it's important to run a mixture of reports and consider the distances each driver covers (for example, a driver that does 1000kms per week and has 10 exceptions, is better than a driver that only gets 5 exceptions, but covers only 100kms)

At simTRAC we can show you how to take all the valuable data and utilise it to produce Driver Score Cards, in order to quickly identify the top and bottom performers and reward or re-educate them. The benefit of this is a safer and more economical driver. Once the automated reports and alerts are set up, this is a very simple process.

## In summary

The quickest way to ensure you have the safest fleet, safest drivers and can get return on investment for your efforts, is:

- Audit of existing vehicles: Repair or replace where necessary and upgrade to safer vehicles over time
- Ensure you have a rigorous vehicle inspection and maintenance programme
- Provide additional driver aids and safety equipment where necessary (roll bars, first aid kits, fire extinguishers, additional lighting or signage etc.)
- Install a quality GPS Fleet Management System such as [simTRAC](#)
- Set-up regular automated reporting and instant alerts, specifically around driver behaviour
- Regularly rank drivers and reward the best - and educate the worst
- Talk to your GPS provider regularly, to ensure you're getting the most from your system and make sure you're kept up-to-date with any new features

For more detail on how to get a great ROI from a well established GPS Fleet Management System, get in touch.