

When to consider driver training

MAY 2018



Fleet Safety Management
driving risk from your fleet

Where does training fit into the risk management process?

With any work-related road risk management program, it is important to use a **proven risk management process** rather than simply select interventions that you hope will improve your collision and claim rates. It is tempting to assume that a training program for your drivers is a sensible way to achieve improvements, but data from organisations who have done this as their main initiative shows that, at best, any reductions in collision frequency are only relatively short-lived and it is not a way to achieve sustainable improvements.

The diagram below illustrates some of the elements of a successful risk management program, and you can find out more information [here](#).



Create a safe working environment

Before any driver-focused interventions are deployed the first thing to ensure is that employees are working in an environment in which they can, should the choose to do so, drive safely. This means that you should have a **comprehensive and robust set of safe driving policies and procedures** and, crucially, that **your operating practices and procedures are aligned with these safe driving policies**. Without this, there is a high risk that any interventions will not bring about a sustainable reduction in your collision and claim rate.

Our advice is always to focus on this safety-operational balance first to ensure that when you do deploy any driver-focused interventions then these are much more likely to be effective.



Selecting the right intervention

When you have identified any risk that you want to manage then you should use the following approach:

1. Firstly, ask yourself whether the risk can be **eliminated**? This is usually some sort of management initiative, changing the way you operate and/or developing appropriate policies and procedures.

An example would be changing the territory a salesperson covered to reduce the amount of travel (and thus exposure).

2. If the risk can't be eliminated, can it be **substituted** for something less risky? This is also usually a management initiative.

An example would be to allow certain journeys, where practicable, to be made by train or airplane, both statistically much safer than road travel.

3. Finally, if the risk can't be eliminated or substituted for something of a lesser risk, can it be **reduced**? This can be a management initiative, or something focused on the individual driver.

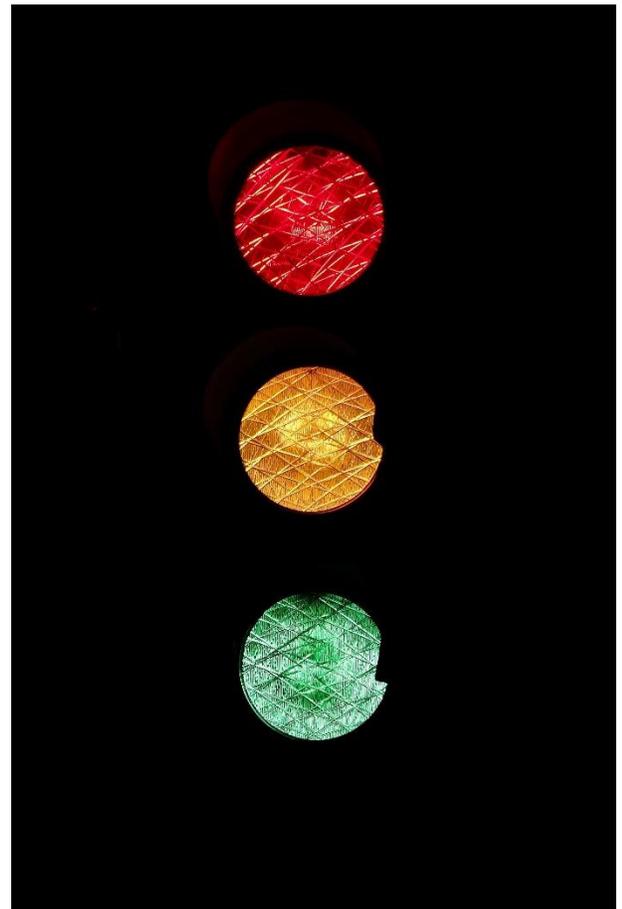
This is where a training intervention could be considered.

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Determining training needs

Any training needs should be as a result of an **assessment**. There are many types of assessment that an organisation can undertake, such as:

- **Risk assessments**, such as those focused on the three fundamental areas of work-related road safety – the driver, the journeys they make and the vehicles they use, along with the driver’s core competencies. These might indicate an area where the driver requires training as well as where management interventions are required.
- **Post-collision reviews**, where the underlying root cause identifies a training need rather than any management interventions.
- **Telemetry data**, such as driver behaviours based on exceptions and trends from speeding (compared to the posted speed limit), braking, cornering and acceleration data. This, on its own, is not enough to determine whether training is an appropriate intervention but does provide good data for a driver debrief where the root causes of the behaviours can be determined.
- **In-vehicle assessments**, such as those undertaken by the driver’s line manager or dedicated assessors, which identifies training needs as an appropriate intervention.



When to consider training

Taking into account that training might not be the first-choice control method, based on the discussion above, the following are situations where it might be a suitable intervention:

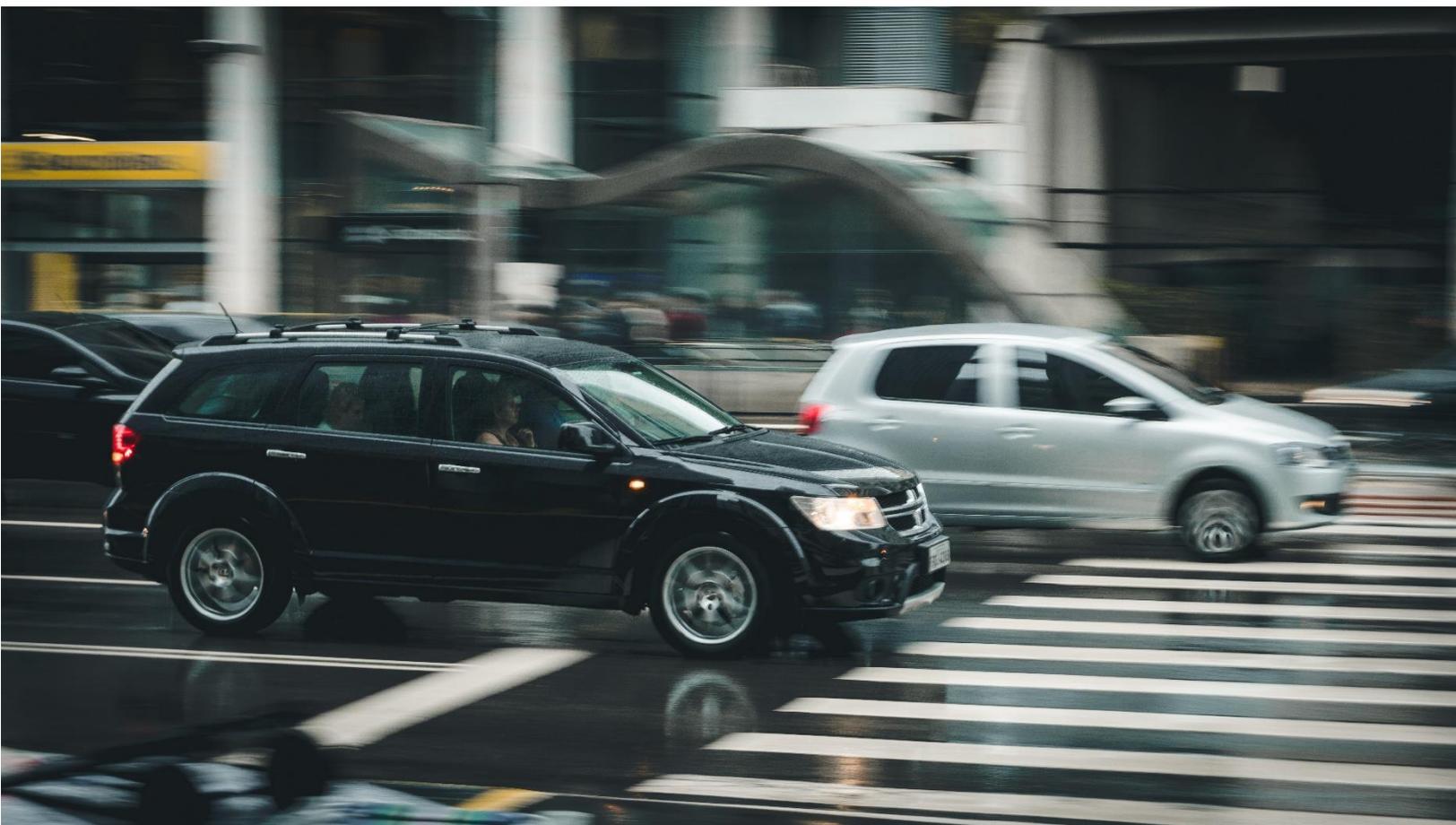
- **For younger drivers.**
- **For older drivers.**
- **For new starters.**
- **For employees changing roles where the type and/or amount of driving changes.**
- **For employees required to drive a different type of vehicle.**
- **For employees where the post-collision review has determined a training need.**
- **Where the outcomes from a risk assessment and/or driver behaviour telemetry debrief has identified a specific training need.**
- **Where an employee is required to drive in a different country.**

Essentially whenever anything changes you should ensure that any risk assessments are still valid and, if not, reassess. One possible outcome from any reassessment is training.

Types of training

There are many types of training to consider, depending on what the issue is and what you want to achieve. This can vary from sitting down with the driver and having a conversation with them through to toolbox talks that you deliver. You can also use external providers to deliver training, with services ranging from e-learning, classroom sessions through to in-vehicle (behind the wheel) training.

The key point here is that any training **should be focused on a specific, identified risk**. As an example, if you identify that someone is having lots of collisions whilst reversing and/or during low speed manoeuvres, and you have decided that all management issues that may have contributed to these collisions have been resolved, then any training must be focused on this task rather than, for example, a more generic defensive driving course.



Determining the effectiveness of your training program

You should always ensure, as part of your on-going work-related road risk management program, that all interventions, including training, are **working effectively** and **achieving a reduction in your overall risk profile** and a corresponding **improvement in your collision and claim rates**.

You should monitor your **collision frequency**, and average cost per claim, as well as more proactive measurements such as trends in driver behaviour telemetry data. If you do not see any improvements (or, in the worst-case scenario, your safety performance is deteriorating) then this is a good indication that some part of your risk management program is not working, and you should evaluate the root cause of the problem. Often this is because the safety-operational balance in an organisation is not right, and employees are not working in an environment in which they can drive safely, taking risks to get the job done.

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If your work-related risk management program, including any training interventions, is not achieving the desired results then you should re-visit the 'plan' and 'do' sections (see earlier diagram) and re-focus your efforts.

Conclusions

Training is a **valuable tool** in the risk management toolbox, but it is important, if it is to be effective, that it is selected and deployed correctly. Employees must be operating in an environment in which they can drive safely, if they choose to do so. This is the most common reason why work-related road risk management programs do not meet the desired outcomes.

You should always base any training needs analyses on the outcomes from assessments, whatever the source of the data. Using the **hierarchy of control** (eliminate, substitute, reduce), determine which risks you will target using training interventions where you cannot, for whatever reason, use management controls to reduce these risks.

Then you need to make sure that the training delivered, whether you are delivering this or it is sub-contracted to a supplier, is **focused on the specific risks identified**.

Finally, you need to ensure that your work-related road risk management program, including any training interventions, is actually **delivering an improvement in your road safety performance and reducing your collision and claim frequencies**. If it isn't then you need to re-visit your entire risk management program and re-focus.

