



Hot Topics in Transportation

Few areas of operations offer the type of risk that transportation does. Transportation generally means a grouping of people (youth) in a small area that is exposed to great risk. Fortunately many of the main causes of accidents can be managed effectively.

Drivers - One of the leading contributors to vehicular accidents is driver error. It is then imperative for organizations to ensure that drivers are well screened, trained and supervised. Driver applicants should follow the same screening process as other staff and also be required to submit to a Motor Vehicle Records (MVR) check. This report should show a record that is consistent with the organization's transportation guidelines and be again conducted on an annual basis. Drivers must possess the appropriate license to operate the vehicles as outlined by state law. Drivers of all owned/leased vehicles should attend training before driving a vehicle and be re-trained on at least an annual basis. Road tests should be conducted at the time of hire and regular supervision by following transportation routes should be implemented. A list of authorized drivers should be kept on file and only these people should be allowed to drive the vehicles. Staff that drives their personal vehicle on the organization's business related purposes should also have their MVR checked and provide proof of insurance at the state mandated minimum levels.

Vehicles - The type of vehicle used is also a critical part of the organization's transportation risk management plan. Most organizations have recognized the inherent dangers in using 15-passenger vans and have since removed them from their fleets. Some that continue to utilize 15-passenger vans should immediately develop a plan to retire them from use and not purchase additional vehicles of this type. 15-passenger vans in current use should be fitted with suspension stabilization to help prevent vehicle roll-over. Mini-busses are a preferred alternative and offer a great variety of configurations to accommodate various program needs. All vehicles must be well maintained and inspected on a daily basis. All vehicles should be equipped with basic safety equipment including: a communication device, first aid kit, reflectors, a blanket and a disposable camera for use in the case of an accident. Additional safety equipment based on the location and the season may be appropriate.

Policies - Organizations should develop and implement a comprehensive transportation policy and ensure practices are put into place that follows the policy. Supervision of children on vehicles is a key component to both preventing accidents and as part of an overall child abuse prevention program. Every effort must be made to ensure that no single driver is operating a vehicle with a single child on it. Emergency procedures should be reviewed with staff and passengers. Drills can be randomly conducted throughout the program cycle.

Training - Defensive driving techniques are important to preventing vehicular accidents. Key points to be included in these practices are speed control, following distances and intersection behaviors. Many vehicle accidents occur in parking lots and while backing-up. Special attention should be given to these areas in training and back-up warning alarms should be installed on all vehicles. Last but not least, seat belts must be worn at all times. This simple practice can significantly reduce the potential for severe injury in the event of an accident.

Other topical safety resources are available from Safe-Wise Consulting.