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Seven Responsibilities of a Safety Director

Hiring a safety director is a worthwhile investment for motor carriers. As safety techniques and regulation requirements continue to change, it can be overwhelming for someone not familiar with this area of responsibility.

If a trucking company has never had a safety director before, what his or her job entails and how he or she benefits the organization can be unclear. The guidelines below should give a general idea of some areas a safety director should oversee.

1. Compliance

Simply complying with federal regulations doesn't guarantee a safe trucking company. However, compliance is good risk management. Failure to comply costs trucking companies time and money and can negatively impact profits.

Specific compliance areas a safety director should address include:

- Driver qualification files
- Maintenance files
- Accident registers and accident files
- Hours-of-Service records
- Financial responsibility statements
- Drug & alcohol testing results
- Hazardous materials records (if applicable)

2. Company Policies and Procedures

In any kind of organization, it is important to know what policies and procedures are in place and to make sure they are documented. Proving unwritten work rules exist and are actually being enforced is difficult, so a written document of the company's expectations for employee conduct is important.

A safety director can ensure the policies and procedures are consistent in their application and enforcement. The safety director can also make sure employees have read and understood the policies and know the consequences for violating them.

3. New Employee Orientation Program

A safety director should develop a New Employee Orientation (NEO) program. NEO lets new employees know that the company values safety, and employees are expected to follow safety policies and procedures at all times.

A safety director can include a basic introduction to protective driving and injury prevention as part of the orientation. He or she should also consider follow-up training about 45-90 days into employment. Habitual job hoppers tend to quit their jobs within this period for various reasons, but a preemptive move to bring them back in for training and a simple morale check-up may remove thoughts of leaving, thus increasing retention rates.

4. Equipment and Facility Inspections

A safety director should conduct regular inspections of the entire terminal, including offices, shops, warehouses, etc. to identify unsafe conditions. These hazards should be reported to management so corrective action can be taken immediately.

Ten Strategies for Successful Trucking Companies (cont'd)

5. Employee Training

Ongoing training for all employees is an important task for a safety director. A company that is experiencing losses yet takes no corrective action cannot expect its results to change. In the case of drivers, most do not receive any safety or compliance training after they obtain their CDL. Therefore, carriers cannot expect unsafe driving behavior to change unless they invest in training to reinforce safe work practices. A safety director can help in this area.

6. Employee Rewards and Recognition Programs

Providing training is easy, but keeping employees interested in and motivated to follow safe working practices is a constant challenge. A safety director could consider an employee rewards and recognition program for outstanding safety results. It is a good way to motivate employees and show them how much their efforts are appreciated. A safety director could use posters, bulletin boards, payroll stuffers, and other media to promote safety and keeping employee interest.

7. Accident and Injury Investigations

A key role for a safety director is to track all accidents and injuries. It is easy to forget minor incidents if they are not recorded, and these could be leading indicators that a bigger incident is just around the corner. Tracking the frequency, severity, and preventability of accidents/injuries is a good way to identify trends. It will also help the safety director focus his or her training efforts.

For CMV crashes, a safety director should keep an accident register to record all crashes, not just DOT reportables. Also, he or she should keep accident files that include pictures, police reports, statements, etc. A safety director can also provide drivers with accident kits and training on how to use them. For workplace injuries and illnesses, he or she should use the OSHA 300, 300A, and 301. These are required by OSHA if your company has more than 10 employees, but smaller companies can use these for tracking purposes, as well.

Note: These lists are not intended to be all-inclusive.



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