

# No fleeting advice

**In any company, the safety and wellbeing of employees is a top priority. After all, a happy and healthy workforce is more likely to be productive and loyal. Tom Preston, managing director of Hippo Leasing gives practical tips for how businesses can improve fleet driver safety...**

If your business operates a fleet of vehicles or has a workforce that is regularly using the roads as part of their job, you'll recognise how important it is to improve road safety. Having well-trained drivers and well-maintained vehicles brings many business benefits including better road safety, lower insurance premiums and claims, reduced fuel consumption and vehicle wear and tear, as well as protecting your corporate image.

### Setting high standards

It may be surprising but by 2030, the World Health Organisation predicts road accidents will become the fifth leading cause of death, ahead of diabetes, malaria and HIV/AIDs.

As a business, setting high safety standards from the outset is a must. This will not only protect your drivers (and others) from harm, it'll also reduce the risk of damaging criminal prosecutions and costly insurance claims. The highest standard of compliance you can achieve is BS ISO 39001. Operating a road traffic safety management system can help formalise your risk management processes and document evidence of your preventative actions such as: driver training, safe driving speeds, vehicle checks and drug and alcohol testing. Smaller businesses can still take advantage of BS ISO 39001; services can be packaged and customised to only include what you need, removing any unnecessary costs and complexity.

### The fight against fatigue

Fatigued driving is a common safety issue and one which businesses can find difficult to monitor and address.

While there are currently no laws in the UK stating that it's an offence to drive while tired, scientists have recently developed a blood test which police could soon be using to identify and prosecute fatigued drivers.

To encourage best practice, set clear and rigid rules about the length of time they can drive safely without taking a break. EU legislation states HGV and coach drivers must take at least a 45-minute break after every 4.5 hours of driving, while van drivers are subject to 30 minutes per 5.5 hours. However, as a rule of thumb, all drivers should plan to take 15-minute breaks every two hours. According to the *Highway Code*, employees should pull over somewhere safe when they start to feel tired, have a couple of cups of coffee or another high caffeine drink, a short nap (15 minutes) and a brief walk to freshen



**Tom Preston**

up. A responsible employer should also encourage individual awareness about the importance of a good night's sleep, as well as a morning routine where workers have at least an hour to wake up before driving.

### Drivers behaving badly

While you may put a lot of trust in your staff, there will be occasions where someone isn't abiding by the rules. Every driver's licence should be checked and verified annually, or even as often as every six months. This is to make sure that their licence is in-date (and therefore legal) and the driver hasn't accrued penalty points which could affect their ability to drive at work. It must also be regularly communicated to your fleet about the dangers and illegality of driving under the influence of alcohol or other banned substances, using a mobile phone while behind the wheel and ignoring the rules of the road. Any driver caught breaking the law will risk their job, licence and freedom.

### Get smart

In a world where technology is advancing rapidly, dash cams, speed limiters and telematics will be more friend than foe when managing a fleet.

Telematics are an invaluable source of data, providing information on a driver's speed, location and fuel efficiency. Real-time information allows route planners to react to changes and potential hazards on the road, helping drivers avoid long delays and dangerous conditions. Preventative maintenance schedules are also easier to create using telematics, providing data on parameters such as mileage, fuel consumption and engine hours, as well as offering a wider view on failure trends in vehicles of the same model and any fault codes which would otherwise go unreported. Retrospectively, telematics will indicate how safe the driver is, providing opportunities for managers to tailor driver training. If you're a fleet manager, implement a 'safe driver of the month' competition to incentivise drivers to strive to be better. Although speed limiters may seem harsh or intrusive, more than 70 people are killed or seriously injured on Britain's roads each day. Having them in place will always keep your drivers at the correct speed, increasing fuel efficiency and reducing emissions, while increasing safety. □

[www.hippoleasing.co.uk](http://www.hippoleasing.co.uk)