The Bumpy Road to Success:
Reducing Fleet Accidents

Kurt Narron
Managing Director
Rural/Metro Corporation
Scottsdale, Arizona

Arthur Thomas, CSP
Vice President
Lockton Companies, LLC
Houston, Texas

Introduction

As Safety Professionals, we recognize there is no magic bullet to achieve the positive results we want in risk management, or for that matter, anything else. Results are achieved only by applying proven risk control best practices and methodologies that experience has shown to be effective. New technology, when added to this equation, it has proved to be a force multiplier and help achieve excellent results.

The objectives of this presentation are to share solutions to the "bumps" encountered when improving driver behavior and skills in relationship to:

- Enhancing risk management controls such as MVR program's,
- Introducing in-cab monitoring technology,
- Developing driver refresher training programs utilizing selected "in-cab" actual driving clips, and reconstructed accident animations of high frequency claims.

This paper addresses the challenges a risk manager faced when taking over an operation. The existing risk management programs contained all the standard loss control elements of a safety program. But what do you do when the usual risk management tools and standard driver training programs do not solve the problem of increasing driver accidents? What new techniques can be used to smooth the "BUMPS" encountered on the road to building a successful Risk Management Fleet program. We will see how the revised program achieved approximately sixty (60) percent reduction in the number of accidents within a five year period.

Some of the "BUMPS"

1. <u>MVR Program</u> – Every company has one, but how effective is it? Our issue: drivers where hired for other skills and certificates/licenses they possessed (i.e. EMT/Paramedic). How do you put "teeth" into your program to make sure you are hiring only good drivers, and yet not loose a lot of your staff in the process?
   a) Revise the MVR policy with black & white standards, based upon a point system. Those below the magic number can drive, those above, can't. We will share how we adopted one to include points assigned for company accidents as well.
   b) Communicate policy revisions to management, supervisory teams as well as employees (which includes union reps if applicable);
   c) Establish a date the new program will begin. Then stair-step it, so only new drivers have to meet it as of the effective date. Current employees have up to three years into the future to achieve a clean MVR record;
   d) If possible, utilize a Third Party to administer the MVR program. Train them on your MVR program. Have them obtain records, evaluate, send acceptance, denied notification;
   e) Establish an appeal process, with the burden of proof on the employee to prove the MVR record is wrong. Decide each case based upon its own merit based upon the revised policy. Probationary periods might be in order, based upon the circumstances of the individual situation.
   f) Make decisions of the appeal board binding and final.

2. Introducing Technology – Normal Risk Management tools are important but often don't address the need of changing driver behavior. How to you insure your driver training is effective and working? You could follow each vehicle but how impractical is that? We looked into utilizing additional resources prior to an accident helping to change driver behavior, one driver at a time. We selected in-cab monitoring technology to provide feedback on specific driving situations.

   In-Cab monitoring technology does not replace the need for a company training program. It helps to identify risky aggressive and illegal behaviors as well as good driving practices. But how do you go about cost justifying it, introducing it, and monitoring it insure you achieve the results listed on the Cost Benefit Analysis. How do you overcome some of these "Bumps"? Here what we did;
   a) Researched the market place for products to meet our needs, talked with vendors, made presentations within the company to get feedback on practicality, etc. After the selection was made, we;
   b) Established a pilot program at a "high" frequency location which included a union. Success measurements where established by a third party (Insurance Carrier Loss Control Service). Criteria involved not only accident records, but hiring practices, fleet maintenance records (i.e. cost per mile, etc.).
   c) Communication meetings where held with management and employees to introduce the equipment, policies and procedures, etc. Training was provided on how to download "events" after each shift, how to counsel and coach employees involved in an "event", etc.
   d) A "grace" period was established once the equipment was installed to allow employees to adjust to the new equipment.

e) The pilot results exceeded our expectations. The report became the basis of our Cost Benefit Analysis to expand the program to all company vehicles (approximately 2,000), over a two year period. The project was approved at the highest level of the company. "Worst first" orders where placed.

f) "Bumps" encountered and overcome include:
    i. "Big Brother" is watching
    ii. "Tampering" with the equipment
    iii. "Data Downloading" issues for remote site vehicles
    iv. "Timely Counseling" sessions
    v. "Storage & Data Integrity" issues
    vi. "Discovery" issues

3. <u>Training Program</u> – Effective training within a multi-location operation is always a challenge, especially in a fast paced, time sensitive industry. Variances in driver trainer experience and presentation skills can leave a lot to be desired. Some operations may take the time to present the material as it is intended but because of platform skills, may not be able to get the message across effectively. Others may not have or take the time to properly cover the material and thus a brief overview is only given. How do you insure a standardized approach in time and course content is present at each operation as designed?

4. Identify the standard practices and training programs being used within the company. Often, what started out as a standard company training program has been modified in terms of content or time to meet local requirements. This can mean the program was "enhanced" and provides better training, or has been "watered" down where the program is a "paper" program.

5. Identify a single standard industry training course to meet your needs. This tends to be an expensive proposition if your company has multiple locations.

6. Identify the effective trainers within the company and bring them into one or more locations to provide what is commonly called a "Train-the-Trainer" session. This is always expensive in terms of time and expenses. What tends to happen next is someone gets promoted, transferred or leaves the company and your supply of "certified" trainers dwindles, so there is a need for even more training classes. The presentations are still subject to time and individual training personalities.

7. PowerPoint presentations are good but not always effective, given the expense of the equipment and the requirement for someone to read a script or present accompanying material.

One way to beat these "bumps" is to develop a proprietary training program on DVD so a facilitator at each location is all that is required. The facilitator takes care of all the necessary administrative requirements and is both experienced and skilled enough to lead the discussion section. Our challenge was to develop an annual driver refresher program that was different enough to hold drivers interest, yet cover the necessary material to improve driving skills. We:

- Gathered up materials and information from existing training classes. Selected appropriate In-Cab driving events from our fleet accident database;
- Developed a script based around our training objectives, using in-cab events to re-enforce "poor" driving techniques and behaviors, with emphases on the desired driving behaviors and habits;

- Enlisted the aid of a production company to take "B-Roll" of various driving situations using our own "rigs".
- Located actual television News broadcasts of accident situations involving our industry, and searched the internet for similar industry accident pictures
- Developed "accident facts" into interesting presentation material such as in a "Myth Busters" format and developed a "Whaddaya Know" on-screen method of testing driver's knowledge.
- The program leads into a final segment called "You Be the Judge" where participants view graphical accident animations of actual company accidents and discuss as a group whether the accident was "Preventable or Non-Preventable". Participants when watch as a narrator presents the "Official" decision with appropriate graphics and comments.

Using this method, standardization is achieved, while ensuring both quality and quantity in training is achieved.

In Summary

As Safety Professionals, we recognize there is no magic bullet to achieve the positive results we want in Risk Management. Results are achieved only by applying proven risk control best practices and methodologies that experience has shown to be effective. In this session, you will see how one company revised there program and achieved a sixty (60) percent reduction in the number of accidents within a five (5) year period by doing the following; enhancing the existing MVR program, introducing in-cab monitoring devices, and developing driver refresher training programs using new technology.