



HOW TO CREATE A FLEET SAFETY STRATEGY

A MANAGER'S ROADMAP



Introduction

Phrases like ‘maximize fleet safety’ seem to come up more and more by vendors and fleet management publications, but what tactical changes or processes can actually have a big impact on the safety of your fleet if implemented?

In this eBook, we’ll answer the question by covering the basics for putting together a plan of attack: **3 things you can focus on to shore up any breakdowns in safety** you may be currently experiencing, and in accordance with FMCSA regulations if you are a motor carrier.



The Importance of Prioritizing Fleet Safety

From 2019 to 2020, the DOT's motor carrier safety agency, the FMCSA, [issued](#) nearly 50,000 warning letters to motor carriers, resulting in over 25,000 total investigations performed.

For new carriers, Out of Service orders for new carriers resulting from failing, refusing, or being unresponsive to audits reached near 16,000 in 2020 from the 40,000 conducted. While over 90% of audited carriers did pass these audits,

out of service (OOS) orders are never good news for growing businesses.

To ensure your organization has what it needs to stay prepared, here are a few of the FMCSA best practices for creating a safety program, including what this should look like, and how to think about this process.

01.

**UNDERSTANDING
THE SAFETY
MANAGEMENT
CYCLE**



If you're unsure where to start when it comes to evaluating your current process, a good guideline to use is the FMCSA's Safety Management Cycle.

This process was developed by the DOT's FMCSA, and was created to help carriers assess where compliance risks or breakdowns are occurring. This is also helpful in identifying the root cause of crashes and other deficiencies.

Even if you are not bound by FMCSA regulations as a motor carrier, these principles are a great starting point for making sure your fleet is as safe and efficient as possible. Preventing negative outcomes like undocumented damage is one of the benefits fleets can experience by simply reviewing this cycle, and identifying areas of improvement that may cause problems if unaddressed.

The 6 Steps in this Process, Safety Improvement Practices

The Safety Management Cycle is an interactive process of 6 steps, which are helpful to review from time to time to ensure you are aligning your safety plan with all relevant aspects and functions of the business.

The following 6 components of this cycle, called safety management processes (SMPs), are important to think through and review in order to keep your fleet safe and compliant:

- Policies and procedures
- Roles and responsibilities
- Qualification and hiring
- Training and communication
- Monitoring and tracking
- Meaningful action

Reviewing the Safety Management Cycle is important, because this is what the FMCSA actually uses during investigations.

During the closeout portion of an investigation, the investigator will typically review the safety management cycle with the carrier, which can help them identify any of the 6 steps in this cycle (called Safety Improvement Practices, or SMPs) that may have contributed to low scores in the certain categories of the SMS that triggered the investigation to begin with.

As an example, after reviewing the SMC, a motor carrier may finally come to realize that the reason why they were flagged for low scores in the SMS relating to vehicle maintenance, was due to a breakdown in establishing roles and responsibilities (step 2 of this cycle).

In this example, since no one was in charge of ensuring that DVIRs were turned in after each shift, this would explain why enforcement officers would have cited these missing reports, thus eventually triggering the investigation.

02.

**DEVELOP A
SAFETY CULTURE**

Making sure you are staying compliant with FMCSA regulations is obviously the objective, but thinking about safety as a means to simply stay compliant isn't enough –safety must be prioritized in the culture of your organization.

Instead of taking a bare-minimum approach to ensuring DVIRs, driver qualification, hours of service, and other requirements are met, **the first step to changing culture is to make safety core value within your company as opposed to a priority.** While priorities can change, safety should be a core value that does not.

In speaking with numerous fleet managers on these safety best practices, P. Sean Garney, VP at Scopelitis Transportation Consulting had this to say about creating this type of culture:

“**Safety Culture is the lens through which employees see how a company feels and acts on safety. It starts from the top of the organization and is reflected in the way safety is managed every day.**”

P. Sean Garney

VP, Scopelitis Transportation Consulting

Since creating a culture of safety starts from within the company, here are a couple of major action items to help implement change in your organization.

3 Action Items for Developing a Safety Culture

1. Have a workplace safety leader and regular workplace safety meetings

2. Create an incentive program safe driving and other behaviors
3. Create a roadmap for pre-screening during hiring, which includes:
 - a. Performance or skills testing (like DOT road test requirements)
 - b. Background checks, including motor vehicle records
 - c. Personality testing during face-to-face interviews
 - d. Medical exam requirements
 - e. Physical ability testing

At the core of any solid safety program is the use of technology to make keeping track of all of these processes easy and effective.

As you'll discover later in this eBook, **data lies at the core of measuring and tracking safety improvements over time**, as well as evaluating your company's safety performance over time.

While you don't have to drown in 1s and 0s to get started, start with setting some measurable safety objectives, and selecting the right software and hardware will make both collecting and analyzing this information possible.

One common example for fleets are daily vehicle inspection reports (DVIRs), where technology like the [Whip Around](#) app has made this process paper-free and easy for drivers.

03.

UTILIZE TOOLS

Implementation of Safety Tech

Depending on the vehicles that make up your fleet, there are several types of technology to be aware of that can make driving and operating vehicles safer and less prone to human error.

This safety technology falls in 3 different categories:

1. Active, on-board technology

- Lane-Keep technology
- Automatic Emergency Braking
- Electronic Stability Control

2. Passive safety technology

- Lane departure warnings
- Blind spot detection
- Video-based onboard safety monitoring

3 Back-office tech

Back-office technology also can provide actionable insight into your fleet, by giving fleet managers access to data otherwise unavailable if keeping track of your day-

day-today operations using paper. A few of these software tools include:

- Electronic Logging Devices
- Electronic DVIR solutions for inspecting and maintaining your fleet digitally
- Fuel card programs
- Trailer tracking systems
- Dynamic voice-command navigation tools

While the list of telematics solutions and safety tech is constantly changing, one thing to keep in mind is that these tools not only can help create the safety culture you are looking for, but also makes driver retention easier.

At the end of the day, these tools will be appreciated by drivers for making their job safer and easier, and will allow dispatchers and managers to stay proactive thanks to the availability of data on their fleet.

The Motor Carrier Safety Planner

If you're looking for a good guide to help you revise your fleet's current safety process, one of these is the FMCSA's free Motor Carrier Safety Planner you can view on their website [here](#).

This guide is a great resource for breaking down FMCSA regulations, and implementing best practices straight from the source.

A few noteworthy sections that can be relevant to putting together internal policies and procedures (even if you aren't bound by federal regulations) can be found in this planner, including:

- Information on vehicle requirements, like inspections or parts and accessories for safe operation
- Driver requirements, including hiring qualified drivers and training
- Passenger transportation guidelines

The safety planner allows anyone to download a huge collection of safety information, which can make creating a safety strategy so much easier.

Since safety is a very broad initiative that affects your hiring strategy, technology stack, and driver training process, it's best to start by using a guide like this to identify what areas may be relevant to your business.





Conclusion

As illustrated, improving fleet safety goes far beyond the context of your vehicle – **it's an overarching strategy** that must address the people working in your organization, and the policies and procedures that they abide by each day.

The fatality rate for accidents involving large trucks still exceeds 5,000 per year [according](#) to the National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration (NHSTA), and is a clear focus for the FMCSA as more technology is encouraged and even mandated on the federal level.

We hope this guide provides a good overview of the components of fleet safety and serves as a starting point for putting together a few action items for your fleet.



Creating Safer Fleets

When it comes to actually inspecting and maintaining your vehicles, the Whip Around app is trusted by thousands of commercial fleets looking to ensure proper vehicle inspections are completed the right way—every time.

If you're ready to ditch paper inspection forms or old processes, and finally ensure proper inspections are completed on a daily or even weekly basis, we're here to help.

We understand how essential the safety of your fleet is, and can help you set up important inspection forms or even maintenance schedules you'd like to set up, all within an easy-to-use platform.

To learn more, [request a demo](#) of the Whip Around platform today, or [start your free trial](#).