

Virtual Member Briefing – Managing drivers – human factors

Questions and answers

Q: Is planning journeys to be North/South instead of East/West a bit excessive?

A: The Health and Safety at Work Act talks about control measures being 'reasonably practical'. If investigation revealed that low East/West sunshine is a contributory factor in incidents, why not think about possible ways of amending routes to remove the possibility of sunshine causing an issue. Then hopefully the outcome is a 'reasonably practical' solution, such as different route planning, which will reduce the risk of an incident reoccurring.

Q: The company could have planned the route in advance to avoid routing issues for the driver and the vehicle?

A: Yes. The key is that low sunshine would have to have been identified as a contributory factor in the incident/s from a thorough investigation. Then the amended route planning for the job by the organisation can help reduce the risk of incidents reoccurring.

Q: If there is a trend of minor incidents with a driver, what or how would you suggest is included in further investigation to prevent a bigger incident, such as this?

A: Consider how likely incidents are to happen again if job and organisational factors are not recognised and actions taken to correct them. Each minor incident would need to be fully investigated, thinking beyond the individual driver and looking at the job and organisational aspects too.

A trend of minor incidents will eventually lead to a major incident. Findings from minor incident investigations can provide valuable information, leading to more refined control measures to prevent reoccurrence and hopefully prevent any major incidents occurring.

Q: If Peter is a regular driver on this run, why did he not report the branch to the operator before?

A: This could have been because his skewed risk awareness of the situation meant he didn't consider it as an issue, or because he didn't feel empowered to report it to his company. The answer would lay within an incident investigation, which in addition to the individual, also looked at the job and particularly at the organisation.

Q: The driver is in control of the vehicle and should make a dynamic risk assessment. The driver has to be empowered by the business to change the route when required.

A: Yes agreed. However, as well as these aspects (driver dynamic risk assessment and empowerment) relating to the individual, the job and organisation can play a large part of mitigating the risks presented to the driver in this scenario. Considering job and organisational factors and implementing effective control measures will reduce the likelihood of incidents reoccurring.

Q: How often should we check our driver's eyesight?

A: A risk based approach would be best as there is no legislative requirement beyond driving licence requirements. A good starting point would be opticians' recommendation of every two years, the same as operators of visual display equipment.

Q: Jason's actions still seem reckless, even in a Just Culture it would be difficult to justify otherwise?

A: Whilst his actions do appear that way, there are many other factors encouraging the behaviours such as payment incentives and unrealistic journey times. Plus, there were tell tale signs going unchallenged such as telematics warnings and working time infringements.

It would be unfair to judge the outcome of the incident without fully investigating all the job and organisational aspects too before deciding on what the actions should be.

Q: We provide incentives to our drivers on the number of deliveries they do, but it was mentioned earlier in a negative light. Should we be reviewing our processes as a result?

A: Tachograph rules state that operators shall not give their drivers incentives that encourage the misuse of tachographs. These organisational and job aspects can drive certain types of responses and behaviours that are not always desirable.

Q: Was there another route for Jason to take?

A: An alternative route would have been one solution to the issue. The fact that he didn't think about that and thought that by driving through the water at speed would result in him satisfactorily getting through, was a result of the many factors we discussed. Ultimately, Jason was a well engaged driver that needed his human factors managing.

Q: If the driver missed two signs, and attempted to drive through that flood water, they should not be on the road?

A: While it may be easy to agree, we did cover the rationale regarding the perception of signs and taking into consideration the other factors that contributed to this incident and challenge this viewpoint. Without looking at the job and organisational aspects to identify other methods to control the risks, it is likely a repeat will occur.

Q: If we made provisions for every driver who needed to swap shifts, start late, or be back early, we'd never get anything done!

A: It would be wrong to ignore people's needs, especially if it had the potential to become a contributory factor in an incident such as this. Using that term 'reasonably practical' when it comes to designing control measures hopefully means that where possible, adjustments can be made and a way to manage and mitigate the risk can be found.

Q: Do logistics UK have a root cause analysis training course specifically for drivers? Our driver trainers have done IOSH but want something more role specific for accident investigations.

A: Our training team would be happy to help, contact them [here](#).

Q: The driver should know the weather conditions he is dealing with, as you say he has 20 years experience?

A: Weather events are changing and becoming more severe, it's easy to say that it's all the responsibility of the driver. Running a transport operation is a 'team sport' and weather conditions should be included as part of the job and organisation assessment of risk, particularly where wind, rain and snow are concerned.

Thinking about aviation, whilst the pilots have a responsibility, there are clear job and organisational processes instructing what can and can't be done in various weather conditions.

Q: Should we look at some sort of Employee Assistance Programme, or even health assessments?

A: Under the Working Time Directive, night workers must have the offer a health assessment before starting the work, and at regular intervals. Employee Assistance Programmes are often seen as a benefit and can often form part of a healthy work culture.

Q: What responsibilities do operators have for employees who are stressed in their personal lives?

A: We mentioned how individuals can be influenced by several factors, including external or personal issues, the job and organisation should have in place reasonable control measures to manage these risks. The better you know your drivers, the more likely you are to spot some of the tell tale signs, the more likely that effective control measures can be implemented to reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring.

Q: At what point would you suggest that action would be taken against an employee in these scenarios?

A: This would be down to any policies the employer had in place, such as a disciplinary policy. There is not necessarily a blanket approach due to the multiple aspects, and multiple individuals, that may have contributed to the factors leading to an incident.