



Crisis management: Post-crash action and care

Guidance for fleet managers

This best practice guidance report is one of a series produced by Global Fleet Champions to help anyone who employs people who drive for work to manage occupational road risk, regardless of budget, fleet size or vehicle type. Global Fleet Champions is a not-for-profit global campaign to prevent crashes and reduce pollution caused by vehicles used for work purposes.

Global Fleet Champions is a partnership initiative administered by Brake, the road safety charity.

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Introduction

The impact of a fatal or serious road crash involving a fleet vehicle and/or driver cannot be understated. An effective crisis management strategy is essential to mitigate the short-term impacts and limit the long-term damages if a crash does occur.¹

This report explores the complications that can arise after a crash involving one of your fleet vehicles or drivers and explains how to introduce policies that will enable you to respond to a crash in a timely, appropriate and compassionate manner. It also covers the importance of recording accurate data that can be used to help identify the cause of a crash and prevent future crashes.

The report is based on presentations given at a webinar for fleet managers about crisis management after a crash involving a fleet vehicle. The webinar was recorded in the UK, but the content of this report will be relevant for fleet managers based anywhere in the world.

An introduction to post-crash management

by Andrew Spence-Wolrich

Managing a road crash is a complex process. You are dealing with an emotionally charged incident that carries the very real risk of death and injury, as well as other wide-ranging consequences that can arise if the situation is handled incorrectly.²

A good forward-thinking post-crash management strategy, with clear policies and procedures, is essential to help you manage the outcomes of a crash in an active and compassionate manner.

Consequences of a crash

Road crashes are an inevitable risk for any fleet and can range from minor incidents to a fatal collision involving multiple vehicles. The way that an organisation reacts to any crash involving one of its vehicles or drivers can have significant financial, operational and reputational consequences, including:

- delays in treatment and emergency response;
- reputational damage (both internal and external);
- a fleet organisation and its employees being held liable; and
- higher insurance premiums.

Fleet managers should always be prepared for a road crash – regardless of safety initiatives designed to prevent these crashes – with a good post-crash management strategy tailored to the operational needs of the fleet.

Developing a post-crash management strategy

A good post-crash management strategy involves preparing key staff for a crash, training drivers so that they know what to do in the event of a crash, and analysing crash data to help inform that strategy.

Preparing for a crash

A series of pre-emptive procedures can be put in place to minimise the immediate impact of a crash. These can include:

- circulating checklists that outline the key tasks to carry out after a crash;
- a trained incident management team ready to act when called upon;
- regularly updating employees' emergency contacts;
- immediately alerting the necessary contacts after a crash (e.g. the emergency services);
- keeping a trained senior employee on-call to provide direct support to the driver; and
- providing drivers with a safe space to stay after a serious or fatal road crash.

Driver training

Any post-crash management strategy should be supported by the drivers themselves – who should be trained to react swiftly and follow correct procedures in the event of a crash.

Driver training should include an overview of any post-crash policies and procedures and how to stay safe in the immediate aftermath of a crash. Drivers should be given access to a reputable first aid course and required to attend regular refresher training.

Driver training should promote a safe and positive work environment, and drivers should be encouraged to self-report any issues that could (or did) result in a road crash.³

Data analysis

Post-crash data can provide valuable insights into how organisations can improve and adapt their strategies.⁴ Information collected from in-vehicle data recorders (often called 'telematics') can help managers to identify weaknesses in a post-crash management strategy and introduce an evidence-based response.

It is important to note that once a fleet has introduced a telematics-based system to manage road risk, it has a legal responsibility to use any data gathered to protect its drivers and other road users – or risk being held liable if one of its vehicles or drivers is involved in a crash.

AUTHOR

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Caring for people: Raising trauma awareness

by Rosie Murray

Good care, compassion and support is essential after a serious crash, for employees, their families and the wider community, and can help people come to terms with what has happened and minimise some of the longer-term consequences of being involved in a crash.

What is trauma?

Psychological trauma often occurs after a distressing event such as a serious road crash and can affect a person's ability to cope.⁵ People who have been involved in a crash or who have been bereaved as a result of a crash are at particular risk of psychological trauma.

The condition has a serious impact on mental and physical wellbeing, often resulting in a wide range of behaviour changes, such as:

- increased irritability, anger and aggression;
- difficulty functioning at home and at work;
- isolation and withdrawal;
- poor sleep patterns; and
- substance abuse (e.g. increased alcohol intake).

Identifying signs of trauma to manage risk

Fleet managers should be aware of and look out for signs that indicate an employee may be affected by psychological trauma. Identifying early-warning signs means they can often be addressed before they become a serious risk.

This may require the support of a qualified mental-health professional (e.g. a trained trauma councillor) and fleet managers should take steps to identify professionals and/or other employees who can provide emotional and practical support to drivers and/or their families.⁶

Bereavement support organisations can often help you to find support professionals locally and may offer advice about raising awareness of trauma to minimise future risk.⁷

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Trauma must be handled in a sensitive and sympathetic way – failure to do so can have a strong impact on the morale, health and wellbeing of your employees. Unchecked trauma can develop into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that will require long-term professional support to manage.⁸

Supporting road crash victims

It is important to remember that the support needs of road crash victims are wide-ranging and dependent on the people involved, the circumstances of the crash and other outside influences.

A good post-crash management strategy offers practical and emotional support to people affected by road crashes to reduce the risk of short-term distress and long-term consequences such as PTSD.

AUTHOR

Rosie Murray MBE is a certified trauma counsellor

Post-crash emergency care

by Neil Bizzell

People who drive for work are at risk of witnessing or being involved in a crash at any time and simple, timely interventions can help save lives.⁹

What to do in the event of a road crash

After witnessing a crash there are some basic actions that drivers can carry out to help protect themselves and other road users:

- park safely at the side of the road; engage the handbrake and turn the vehicles' wheels away from the crash site; turn on the hazard lights;
- remain alert to traffic and ensure that the vehicles/crash site is visible to passers-by;
- call the emergency services once your vehicle is safely parked and the engine is turned off;
- make sure that the handbrake(s) of the vehicle(s) involved is engaged;
- carry out a basic emergency assessment on the people involved; and
- be prepared to carry out first aid actions (if you have received adequate training from a reputable training provider).

First aid training

First aid training will give drivers the skills and knowledge they need to provide emergency first aid care in the immediate aftermath of a crash while minimising their exposure to danger and/or liability.

Drivers should receive first aid training before they are allowed behind the wheel and should attend regular refresher training. As a fleet manager, you are responsible for ensuring the quality of the training provider you select, i.e. that the trainers are qualified and the training is of a high standard. In the UK, for example, the British Red Cross provides a due diligence checklist to help you choose a reputable training provider.¹⁰

Essential equipment

Drivers must be equipped with the tools to provide basic emergency care at the roadside, while waiting for emergency services professionals to arrive. This should include a complete first aid kit; an emergency blanket; a torch and a high-visibility vest.

Vehicle technology can also be set to inform fleet managers about a crash and to alert the emergency services to the exact location of the crash, even in more remote locations.¹¹

AUTHOR

Neil Bizzell is a critical care paramedic for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance.

Case study: MiX Telematics

MiX Telematics is an end-to-end safety solutions provider, experienced in post-crash analysis – using information collected by in-vehicle data recorders (also known as ‘telematics’) to identify the causes of a crash and operational weaknesses that contributed to the crash.¹²



Using post-crash data

Recent advances in data analysis, in-vehicle technology and sensing technology help to identify why a crash has happened and provide recommendations on how to prevent future crashes from occurring. Fleet managers gain access to a manageable dataset that can be used to identify dangerous driving behaviours and operational weaknesses.

Analysing the events that result in a crash

Fleet managers can use a wide range of performance metrics to analyse the events that result in a crash, including:

Second-by-second data mapping: tracks the speed of a vehicle to show how it behaved throughout the journey, highlight dangerous driving behaviours and establish the situational context of the crash.

Camera footage: visual evidence from dual-facing cameras is used to determine the behaviour of employees and other road users. This data can also be used to improve driver training procedures.

Heat-mapping: uses colour coding to highlight incident hotspots and establish the risk profile of an area. This information can also be used for route-planning and driver training.

Managing work-related road risk

End-to-end safety solutions can help fleet managers assess the effectiveness of their road-risk management procedures and any underlying operational issues after a crash.



The hidden costs of a crash and practical solutions

by Andy Price

There are various unexpected costs that can arise in the aftermath of a road crash, beyond the initial vehicle repairs and potential fines. These hidden costs can create serious problems for any organisation that fails to implement a practical work-related risk management strategy.

The hidden costs of a crash can include:

Legal costs: Failure to introduce strong fleet management procedures that are regularly audited can result in the organisation and its managers being held liable in the event of a crash. This may result in serious financial repercussions if the organisation is taken to court.

Financial costs: Fleet managers may face various unforeseen costs after a crash. These can range from lost resources to higher insurance premiums and repairs that might not be covered by the fleet's insurance policy.

Corporate costs: Drivers involved in a serious or fatal crash will often require time off work, leading to a loss of working hours. A crash resulting in death or serious injury can also cause serious reputational damage and result in lost business. Other corporate costs can include loss of productivity, late deliveries, missing Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and higher rates of absenteeism.

A strong road safety culture should be a key element of any organisation's corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy but often goes unnoticed when companies forget the importance of protecting communities from crashes involving their employees making work-related journeys.

Developing an open and honest management culture with practical policies that put safety first, can help a fleet to reduce the hidden costs and reduce the risk of the organisation and/or its employees being held liable in the event of a crash.

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How to write a post-crash policy

by Glen Davies

A robust post-crash policy will affirm an organisation's commitment to the wider health and safety agenda¹³ and is vital to ensure that there are clear procedures on what to do following a crash. It will help ensure that:

- there is senior leadership support for following post-crash procedures (e.g. a statement of intent from the board);
- its purpose and scope are clearly defined with no ambiguity;
- there is a quick and appropriate response in the event of a crash; and
- a considered analysis of crashes is made to identify remedial actions, issues and trends.

Ultimately the policy will help ensure that the:

- crash is managed safely and legally, and reported to the relevant authorities promptly;
- facts are collated accurately and recorded correctly (including people involved and property damaged);
- vehicle involved is repaired to a safe and legal state prior to being returned to the road;
- driver involved is assessed for well-being and competency to ensure they are able and fit to return to driving duties;
- crash is fully investigated to determine both primary and contributory factors which led to the collision; and
- facts are analysed to determine and implement any remedial actions which may prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

Roles and responsibilities

Individuals need to know what to do in the event of a crash. A good post-crash policy will include the specific responsibilities of fleet managers, drivers and collision investigators, as detailed below.

Fleet managers: Should be familiar with post-crash policies and procedures and will be responsible for sharing information with employees to ensure that drivers are aware of their duties. After a crash, they are also responsible for ensuring that drivers are assessed to determine their fitness to drive and that vehicles are roadworthy.



Drivers: Should be aware of how to respond in the event of a crash and adhere to policies and procedures, while ensuring their own safety and that of other road users. They need to have very clear actions to de-escalate the situation while adhering to the local rules of the road. They will be required to complete post-crash documentation and participate openly and honestly with the post-crash investigation.

Collision investigators: Conduct the post-crash investigation and carry out an important role, the complexity of which is often underestimated. They should log any data recorded and use it to determine the underlying causes of the crash and any ongoing operational weaknesses. They should then make informed recommendations based on this analysis. Investigators will offer recommendations for the driver and the fleet manager (e.g. scheduling, routing, training issues) for any areas in need of attention.

Post-crash documentation

It is vital that post-crash documentation is completed, including:

At-the-scene collision report: this records the driver's actions during and in the direct aftermath of the crash. This should be completed as soon as it is safe to do so – potentially at the scene – to ensure information is recorded while the driver's memory is fresh.

Driver post-collision report: a neater, clearer version of the at-the-scene collision report, completed once the driver has returned to the fleet office/depot.

Manager post-collision report: this provides background information on the driver, including their collision history, training records, medical issues and any in-vehicle data available. This should be completed within the first 24-hours of the crash being reported.

Post-collision investigation: report recording and verifying the actions and events of the crash using the data already collected. A qualified collision investigator will then use this information during the driver interview to determine liability and the contributory factors of the crash.

Supporting procedures

A post-crash policy should work in tandem with other health and safety policies in a fleet. It should be supported by internal management procedures, communications channels and resources that can be disseminated within the fleet. Communication resources can range from the organisation's driver handbook to toolbox talks and staff briefings.

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