

To The Point Incident Review Committees

A company-wide incident review committee should be part of any fleet safety program, setting forth standards for crash prevention, incident investigation, and how driver performance is evaluated.

Purpose of an Incident Review Committee

A committee can emphasize the importance of safe driving, develop a sense of responsibility among all employees driving during company business, reduce the number of vehicle crashes, and create an awareness of the need to always drive defensively. The committee should also provide investigation, documentation, and reporting on all work-related driving injuries, property damage, and near-collisions. They should recommend steps to take to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Typically, an incident review committee determines whether a crash or a vehicle-related incident (damage while parked, animal strike, road hazards, and so forth) was preventable. Preventability is an important concept in motor fleet safety. When a crash or incident occurs, the events leading up to, during, and after the incident should be reviewed for contributing factors such as operator error, environmental conditions, or vehicle malfunction.

The primary purpose of such a review is loss prevention through risk reduction – the basis for fleet safety management. The main emphasis is to critique each occurrence so the driver will not repeat the mistake and to identify any mechanical failures or equipment deficiencies that can be improved or repaired. Incident reviews can:

- Set standards for incident investigation and review.
- Reveal loss trends or patterns.
- Develop a safer environment for employees and the public.
- Recommend policies and procedures to prevent future losses.
- Convince managers and employees (through awareness and training activities) that they are primarily responsible for preventing vehicle-related crashes and incidents.
- Help make fleet safety an integral part of the organization's operating procedures, culture, and programs.
- Educate employees about safety issues, new standards, and research findings.
- Help ensure compliance with federal and state fleet safety standards.
- Provide safe driving awards and incentives.
- Help develop disciplinary procedures and criteria for termination of driving privileges.

Determining Preventability

A company should have pre-determined criteria defining what incidents are preventable vs. non-preventable. The National Safety Council offers a Guide to Determine Motor Vehicle Collision Preventability based on the different types of collisions. This would be a valuable resource for an incident review committee.

The company should also spell out data that will be used to determine incident preventability, such as:

- The driver's initial report of the incident (including any statements from the driver and witnesses)
- The police report of the crash
- Insurance provider or on-scene adjuster's report
- The findings of the Internal Safety Department's investigation of the crash
- Telematics, company/personal phone, vehicle EDR (black box), and any dash cam videos and data
- Any other supporting documents

Creating an Incident Review Committee

A good place to start is by defining and developing procedures for the committee make-up, the member selection process, qualification requirements, the length of individual membership, and rotation of membership. These criteria should cover all membership positions and functions. The adopted criteria for membership selection should be consistent with any applicable state and local union contractual language.

To be effective, members of the committee should have thorough training in the concepts of preventability and defensive driving and should be willing to apply these concepts in an unbiased manner. In the case of a small fleet, the safety committee could also act as an incident review committee.

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Committee Meetings

The committee should meet on a regular schedule or as needed and at a convenient time for all members and representatives. Typically, committees either:

- Meet according to a schedule to screen and study all collisions, determining whether they were preventable and recommending preventative methods; or
- Function as an appeals committee, reviewing only those cases where preventability is questionable. In these cases, the safety supervisor decides whether an employee should be held accountable for their incident. If the driver is not satisfied with the decision of the safety supervisor, they present the case to the committee for review, in which case the committee's decision is final.

To accomplish these objectives, the committee should:

- Develop a written mission statement coordinated with the company's fleet safety program.
- Clearly define the duties and responsibilities of members.
- Identify and prioritize goals and establish an action plan to achieve each goal.
- Include representation from various levels and areas of the organization.
- Record and disseminate problems, issues, corrective action proposed, and actions taken to address each issue.
- Develop methods to increase and maintain fleet safety awareness.

Incident review committees are not responsible for all fleet crash prevention. The committee's activities represent only a part of the overall fleet safety program. However, much can be accomplished through in-depth reviews of incidents. This process can raise drivers' awareness of their mistakes, enhance fleet safety programs, and provide opportunities for training in proper defensive driving techniques.

Resources

National Safety Council: Guide to Determine Motor Vehicle Collision Preventability, www.nsc.org/shop/books/a-guide-to-preventability-collision-th-edition

NIOSH Center for Motor Vehicle Safety, www.cdc.gov/niosh/centers/motor-vehicle.html

OSHA Topics: Motor Vehicle Safety, www.osha.gov/SLTC/motorvehiclesafety/index.html

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Crash Preventability Determination Program (CPDP), www.fmcsa.dot.gov/crash-preventability-determination-program

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[Motor Vehicle Record \(MVR\) Guide](#)

[Incident Report Form](#)

[Fleet Crash Investigation](#)