Driver Training and Motivation

**Background**

Training and motivating drivers is an important part of any Fleet Loss Prevention Program. An effective program will integrate both activities into the role of the fleet manager and will serve to enhance the knowledge, skills and performance of the drivers.

Training is necessary to supplement the driver selection process because individuals cannot always be selected who have all of the knowledge and skills required for the job.

**Driver Training**

Training should be used to supplement your driver selection process. The amount of training needed varies directly with the complexity of the job as well as with the knowledge and experience of the driver. An effective driver-training program will highlight the knowledge and skills necessary for an employee to perform at a satisfactory level. Proper training will help reduce operational disruptions and minimize unnecessary costs due to accidents and equipment abuse.

When implementing or enhancing a driver-training program, there are three levels of training that need to be addressed:

- **Orientation training** - to indoctrinate new drivers to your company and your policies/procedures
- **Refresher training** - to update drivers on specific changes in relation to driving routes, cargo, equipment, regulations, company procedures and other pertinent information
- **Remedial training** - to address substandard performance issues

At a minimum, your company's driver training program should include specific instruction on topics such as:

- Government regulations
- Company policies and rules
- Familiarization with company vehicles
- Driving routes and schedules
- Client handling procedures
- Emergency procedures and warning devices
- Accident reporting procedures
To facilitate the driver training program, a driver trainer should be designated. In larger companies, several driver trainers may be designated. The use of designated trainers tends to make training more consistent and uniform. It is not always necessary to maintain a full-time driver trainer, depending on the size of your fleet. Many companies designate a part-time trainer from the existing drivers. An individual selected as a driver trainer should be one who commands the respect of the other drivers, has a good driving record and has the ability to convey information in a stimulating manner. If the appropriate resources needed to hire an outside driver trainer are unavailable, please contact your local insurance agent or PIC Production Underwriter for assistance.

Driver training can be completed either in a classroom or in-vehicle setting. Classroom training can be accomplished using either a one-on-one or group training approach. This setting is effective for presenting topics such as government regulations, accident reporting procedures and company policies and rules. In-vehicle training provides one of the best methods of giving practical instruction to a driver under closely controlled conditions. This setting is effective for presenting topics such as familiarization with company vehicles, driving routes and schedules, client handling procedures, emergency procedures and warning devices.

To establish a driver training program or to enhance an existing one, several training programs are available from agencies such as the National Safety Council and the American Trucking Association.

**Driver Motivation**

Some drivers will perform exceptionally for wages alone or the self-satisfaction of accomplishing the task, while other drivers require additional forms of motivation. One motivational technique commonly used is a driver incentive program. Incentive programs can be used for accident-free driving, fuel-efficient driving, or whatever other parameter is suitable for your particular operations.

A driver incentive program can provide many different types of awards (pins, belt buckles, patches, gift certificates, etc.) and may provide a substantial return on your investment if they are administered properly and stimulate driver interest. The goal of the incentive program can only be reached if there are established rules and procedures to assure that the drivers and supervisors alike understand the program. Awards should be made promptly upon reaching established goals, preferably by top management, and in the presence of peers. Whenever possible, publicity should be arranged through local newspapers, company newsletters and other forms of communication.