

Motor vehicle safety

It's time to think differently about motor vehicle accidents

In the past it wasn't necessary to notify Oregon OSHA about work-related motor vehicle crashes but beginning Jan. 1, 2007, you'll have to report them if they result in overnight hospital stays or fatalities. "We haven't done everything we can to create truly safe workplaces in Oregon until we address the largest single source of on-the-job fatalities in the state and in the nation — motor vehicles," said Oregon OSHA Administrator Michael Wood.

Motor vehicle crashes also have far-reaching effects on victims and their families, and cost Oregon employers millions of dollars annually. If your employees need to drive when they're on the job, you should manage motor vehicle safety just as carefully as you manage any other aspect of your business. Consider the following to keep your employees safe when they're driving and to ensure that your company's vehicles are safe to drive.



Involve the managers

Managing driver safety starts with commitment from the top. Management's commitment to motor vehicle safety helps ensure that employees follow safe practices and that company vehicles are properly maintained. If managers aren't committed to safety, employees won't be either.

Do a risk analysis

A risk analysis can track how effectively your company is managing vehicle safety. Start your analysis by determining what data your company has on its motor vehicle accidents; you'll need this data to establish a baseline for evaluating accident trends. Don't forget recordkeeping logs such as the OSHA 300 and OSHA 300A. It's a good idea to keep data on all incidents that involve motor vehicles — even those that don't result in damage or injury.

Prepare a written vehicle safety policy

A vehicle safety policy should express your company's concern for employees' safety and describe their responsibilities as drivers and passengers. The policy should cover employees' responsibilities when they use any vehicle as an agent of your company: for example, company vehicles for personal use, personal vehicles for company business, and rental or leased vehicles used for business. Employees also should acknowledge, in writing, that they have read and understood the policy.

Common measures for evaluating motor vehicle incidents:

- **Incident rate** = number of incidents X 100 / number of vehicles operated
- **Incident rate** = number of incidents X 1,000,000 / vehicle mileage
- **Injury incident rate** = number of incidents with injury X 1,000,000 / vehicle mileage
- **Incidents per 10,000 deliveries** = number of incidents X 10,000 / number of deliveries
- **Incidents per 10,000 loads** = number of incidents X 10,000 / number of loads
- **Passenger injury incident rate** = number of vehicle incidents resulting in passenger injury X 1,000,000 / number of passengers carried
- **Passenger injury rate per million miles** = number of passenger injuries X 1,000,000 / vehicle mileage
- **Vehicle incidents per 200,000 hours** = number of incidents X 200,000 / number of hours worked

Develop safe drivers

Define driver qualifications. Make sure that driver qualifications and special licensing requirements are included in employees' job descriptions.

Run record checks. Tell prospective employees that your company will review their state motor vehicle records and check references from previous employers as part of the hiring process. Review employees' driving records at least annually.

Did you know? Oregon's Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) offers an Automated Reporting Service (ARS) for employers that produces and sends the employer a court-printed driving record when a conviction, accident, or suspension is posted to one of their employee's records. For more information about the Automated Reporting Service, call (503) 945-5427 or (503) 945-5428.

Evaluate employees' driving records. Consider establishing a point system for assessing employees' driving records and determining those whose driving is not satisfactory. For example, you could assign "points" for different categories of moving violations then determine how many points trigger an unsatisfactory driving record.

Educate and train. Ensure that your employees understand your company's vehicle safety policy when they're hired. Many companies have discovered that their new hires have more motor vehicle accidents than veteran employees. Require new hires to participate in safe-driving training as soon as possible after they're hired. Other employees should have the opportunity to periodically update their driving knowledge and skills. Key training topics cover:

- *Defensive driving skills*
- *Substance abuse policy*
- *Distracted driving hazards*
- *Characteristics of aggressive driving*
- *Vehicle inspection procedures*
- *Necessary emergency equipment*

Discipline and reward. Make it clear to employees that those who violate vehicle safety policies will be disciplined. Drivers who have a history of preventable incidents should receive training that improves their skills. Also, give credit to employees who have exemplary driving records; recognition or special privileges can be effective incentives.

Keep accurate records. Each employee's personnel file should have the following information: a copy of the employee's current Oregon motor vehicle record, reports of incidents involving company vehicles, reference checks from former employers, training records, and a copy of the employee's current driver license.

Keep the vehicles safe

Fleet safety. Don't overlook crashworthiness when your company purchases vehicles. You can learn about the safety of a particular vehicle make and model at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Web site: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

Choose appropriate equipment upgrades. Before you purchase items such as trailer hitches, cargo racks, or custom tires and wheels, make sure that they're appropriate and safe for drivers and passengers.

Prepare for emergencies. All vehicles should have equipment that helps drivers respond to highway emergencies. Flares or warning signs, a first-aid kit, flashlight, a reflective safety vest, and a fire extinguisher should be essential items; drivers must know where they're located and how to use them.

Establish a regular inspection/maintenance schedule. Develop procedures that ensure company vehicles receive thorough inspections and maintenance on a regular schedule such as miles driven, hours operated, or calendar days. Have employees report mechanical problems to their supervisors immediately.

Document and investigate incidents

Report all incidents. Your company should have a written procedure that tells employees what to do if they're involved in an accident or if they damage a vehicle. The procedure should identify who to notify and what forms are necessary to report the incident; require employees to report incidents *within 24 hours*.

Incident review and analysis. Review all incidents to determine why they occurred and how to prevent them from happening again. Identify what caused it (the root cause) and any contributing factors. Put the findings in writing.

Know the rules

Oregon DMV. The Oregon Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Vehicle Code Book (www.oregon.gov/ODOT/DMV/forms/vehiclecodebk.shtml) includes requirements for vehicle registration, driver licensing, and rules of the road.

Oregon OSHA. Oregon OSHA's motor-vehicle safety requirements apply to general industry (Subdivision 2/N, 437-002-0223), construction (Subdivision 3/O, 1926.601), agriculture (Subdivision 4/U, 437-004-3410, and forest activities (Subdivision 7/F). Paragraph 654.010 of the Oregon Revised Statutes (the general duty clause) requires employers to "furnish ... a place of employment which (is) safe and healthful for employees ..." and also applies to company vehicles.

Reminders for drivers

Buckle up. Seat belts are the most effective way to prevent deaths and serious injuries in traffic crashes. In Oregon seat-belt use is 93.3 percent, the fifth-highest rate in the U.S. All drivers and passengers must use seat belts. Limited exemptions are allowed under ORS 811.215. Vehicle owners are required to keep seat belts working properly.

Don't drink and drive. Alcohol use was a factor in 38 percent of the fatal motor vehicle crashes in Oregon in 2004. It's estimated that three in every 10 Americans will be involved in a crash caused by impaired driving. Alcohol, certain prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and illegal drugs can all impair a person's ability to drive safely. Drivers who have a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 percent or more are considered intoxicated under Oregon law.

Stay focused and awake. Distracted driving was a factor in at least 10 percent of motor vehicle crashes in Oregon in 2004. It's common to see people reading or talking on cell phones while they're driving, but driving is not the time for multi-tasking. Drivers make more than 200 traffic-related decisions per mile, so it's critical to focus only on driving. Drowsiness also increases a driver's risk of a crash and may be significantly underreported in police crash investigations. Such crashes often occur on rural highways when the driver is alone — usually late at night, early in the morning, or mid-afternoon.

Watch out for pedestrians. Pedestrians have the right of way at all intersections, even those that don't have painted crosswalks.

Keep your cool. Some drivers will do almost anything to get to their destination on time — tailgating, weaving in traffic, and ignoring traffic lights and the rights of other drivers. This aggressive behavior contributes to an increasing number of traffic crashes on urban roadways. Aggressive driving is different than the media-inspired road rage, in which the driver uses a vehicle as a weapon or physically assaults another driver; road rage is a criminal offense. Keep your cool in traffic and allow plenty of time to reach your destination. When traffic comes to a standstill, play that meditation CD you got last Christmas.

Know what you're driving and where you're going. Familiarize yourself with the vehicle controls before driving a rental car or a company car that you haven't driven before. And check your route before you start driving on unfamiliar streets.

Secure loose items. Are you sure that 10-foot ladder you're hauling in the back of the pickup will stay there when you're on the freeway? Unsecured and poorly secured items are hazards if they become airborne and can harm your passengers or those in vehicles behind you. Make sure such items are properly stored and secured — inside or outside the passenger compartment.

Getting traction in the winter

If you do much winter driving in Oregon, you've probably seen the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) SNOW ZONE signs that tell you the current requirements for chains or traction tires. But do you know what they mean? Here's a primer.

1. You must have chains or traction tires in or on your vehicle, they must be the right size for your vehicle, and of sufficient number to comply with ODOT's chain requirements.

SNOW ZONE

**CARRY CHAINS
OR
TRACTION TIRES**

2. You must use chains if your vehicle is towing or rated more than 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight (GVW). Chains must also be used on a trailer or vehicle being towed if it has a brake that operates while in tow.

SNOW ZONE

**CHAINS REQUIRED
ON VEHICLES TOWING
OR OVER 10,000 GVW**

3. You must use chains if your vehicle is towing or weighs over 10,000 pounds GVW. If your vehicle weighs 10,000 pounds GVW or less and is not towing you must use chains or traction tires. Chains must also be used on a trailer or vehicle being towed if it has a brake that operates while in tow.

SNOW ZONE

**CHAINS REQUIRED
TRACTION TIRES
ALLOWED ON VEHICLES
UNDER 10,000 GVW**

Drivers who disobey SNOW ZONE signs are subject to a class C traffic infraction.

During severe weather, ODOT may require all vehicles to use chains. This is known as a conditional road closure.

Chains include any device that attaches to the wheel, vehicle, or outside of the tire, that is designed to increase traction on ice and snow.

Traction tires are studded tires or other tires that are suitable for use in severe snow conditions. These tires are marked with a mountain/snowflake emblem on the sidewall like this:



Studs must be made of a rigid material that wears at the same rate as the tire tread and must extend at least 0.04 inch but not more than 0.06 inch beyond the tread surface. Studded tires are legal for use in Oregon from Nov. 1 to April 1. For information on tires that are suitable for use in severe snow conditions, contact your tire dealer.

A four-wheel or all-wheel drive passenger vehicle is exempt from ODOT's chain requirements if all of the following are true:

- a) It has an unloaded weight of 6,500 pounds or less.
- b) It is operated to provide power to both the front and rear wheels.
- c) It is carrying chains.
- d) It has mud-and-snow, all-weather radial, or traction tires on all of its wheels.
- e) It is not towing another vehicle.
- f) It is not being operated in a manner or under conditions that cause the vehicle to lose traction.



For more info, click on "Trip Check" on the ODOT Web site: www.oregon.gov/ODOT/

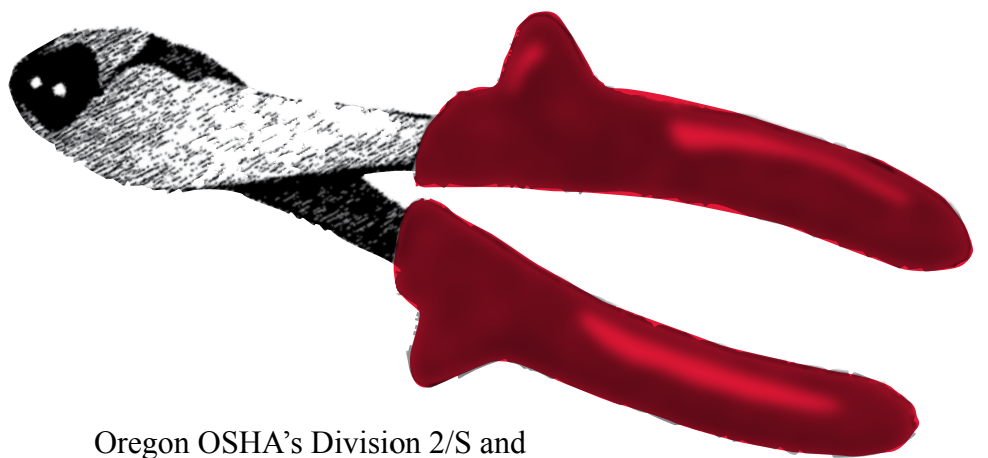
Electrical safety

Coated hand tools may not protect you from electrical hazards

By Ron Haverkost, Oregon OSHA technical specialist

Recently, while removing lighting on a demolition project, a worker inadvertently cut an energized power cord with a pair of pliers that caused a spark and a hole in the cutting portion of the pliers. The worker used pliers with plastic-coated handles made for ergonomic comfort; however, this type of coating doesn't insulate against electrical current and doesn't provide a complete safety barrier.

Some hand tools such as electrically rated lineman's pliers have insulated handles that are designed to withstand specific voltage levels - for example, 1000 volts a.c. The coated pliers that most workers use are not electrically rated. Insulated hand tools must be covered with material that protects the user from electric shock and minimizes the risk of a short circuit. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM F1505) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC 60900) specifies the requirements for selecting and using insulated hand tools.



Oregon OSHA's Division 2/S and Division 3/K electrical safety rules

require employers to have safe work practices that protect employees who work near or on energized equipment or circuits. Live parts that an employee may be exposed to must be de-energized before the employee works on or near them. If de-energizing live parts makes work more hazardous or is not feasible, employers must use other effective safe practices.

Never assume that a hand tool is acceptable for work on energized equipment because it has a plastic coating on its handles. Although insulated hand tools must meet specific industry standards, they provide only a partial barrier from electrical hazards. The safest way to work on electrical equipment is to make sure that it's de-energized before you begin.

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In this issue: ■ **Motor vehicle safety.** Last September, Oregon OSHA amended its recordkeeping and reporting rule — ORS 437-001-0700 — to include motor vehicle crashes; beginning Jan. 1, 2007, you'll have to report work-related motor vehicle crashes to Oregon OSHA if they result in overnight hospital stays or fatalities. If your employees need to drive when they're on the job, you should manage vehicle safety just as carefully as you manage any other aspect of your business. This issue helps you start the new year by making sure that your company's vehicles are safe to drive and your employees are safe drivers. ■ **Getting traction in the winter.** If you drive on Oregon's roads during the winter you've probably seen the SNOW ZONE signs that tell you the current requirements for chains or traction tires. Do you know what they mean? This issue offers a primer. ■ **Electrical safety.** Are you using plastic-coated hand tools to work on energized equipment or circuits? It's not a good idea. Oregon OSHA's Ron Haverkost tells you why such tools won't protect you from electrical hazards.

By the numbers: Oregon Construction Employment, Jan.-Oct., 2006

