As an employer, you assign many tasks to your workers every day. Some of those tasks are riskier than others. One of those is driving. Driving is one of the riskiest activities that an employer can assign to a worker. More workers are killed in motor vehicle incidents (MVIs) than in any other workplace activity.

Your workers drive as part of their job, and you expect them to drive safely. But if they’re driving company-owned or company-leased vehicles, you have a responsibility to make sure that they are properly trained, the vehicles are well-maintained, and there is an effective Road Safety Program in place. It’s also important that your company demonstrate its commitment to safety by creating and fostering a culture of safety in the workplace.

Driver training
Your drivers need to know how to drive defensively. There are many excellent training courses available. Defensive driving will help your workers recognize and control the hazards associated with driving. For more information, read the Defensive Driving article on pages 16 and 17.

Vehicle maintenance
Preventive maintenance is the systematic care and protection of tools, equipment, machines, and vehicles in order to keep them in a safe, usable condition, limit downtime, and extend productivity. However, be aware that maintenance tasks themselves can potentially be hazardous and result in injury.

Make sure you train any new employees and remember to refresh or upgrade your veteran employees’ training regularly. Refresher courses will help remind workers about the safe driving habits they’ve learned through past training. And if one of your workers has been involved in an MVI, they will need to be retrained.

Workers should receive training on the specific vehicles and equipment they will be required to drive or operate as part of their job. It’s also a good idea to conduct routine assessments of your workers to help you identify any medical conditions or changes in fitness that could affect their ability to drive.

Are you on the road to a successful fleet safety program?
A successful vehicle maintenance program
• is well organized and scheduled
• controls hazards
• defines operational procedures
• includes training for key personnel.

Ensure that vehicles are properly inspected and serviced regularly. All vehicles used by employees must be maintained in compliance with Ontario’s Highway Traffic Act and its associated regulations. Get a recommended maintenance schedule from the vehicle’s manufacturer. Make sure that the person performing the maintenance is competent (e.g., a licenced mechanic) and keep a record of all maintenance and service work.

Road Safety Program
An employer must have a Road Safety Program and develop policies and procedures on driver’s licence requirements, safe driving practices, vehicle maintenance, and collision or injury investigations. Work with your Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative to develop a program that works for you and your workers. Once you’ve put together your program, make sure you communicate it to all employees. They need to be aware of the policies and understand their obligations.

Develop company policies on such topics as
• Using company vehicles
• Using hands-free communication devices
• Reporting collisions
• Driving in bad weather
• Driving hours and rest periods
• Smoking in vehicles
• Substance abuse.

IHSA has several resources to help you. Visit our Road Safety Program topic page for helpful information and the Policy and Program Resources section of our website (under Tools and Resources) for documents that you can customize to suit your needs.

Safety culture
Companies that show they care about their employees often experience an increase in productivity and in staff retention. In addition, companies that develop a strong safety culture are often recognized for their commitment to safety and are well-respected in their communities.

Make sure your Road Safety Program includes your responsibilities as the employer to protect your workers. Employer responsibilities can include such things as
• Making sure your company has the proper insurance coverage for the type of work being done
• Ensuring that all vehicles are properly insured, including your employees’ personal vehicles if they are used for work purposes
• Ensuring that your employees who drive as part of their work duties have a valid and appropriate driver’s licence for the type of vehicle they drive. It’s a good idea to make a photocopy of their licence and put it in their personnel file.
• Getting driver abstracts from the Ministry of Transportation to help determine who the high-risk drivers are so corrective action can be taken before an incident occurs
• Assigning deadlines that give workers enough time to take weather and road conditions into account and to comply with posted speed limits.

Benefits
A good fleet safety program takes planning, communication, time, and resources. But in the long run there can be many benefits. Fewer collisions mean smaller repair bills, fewer out-of-service vehicles or injured employees, less management time devoted to paperwork involving collisions, and lower fuel costs. In addition, a reduction in MVIs can reduce your risk of liability, resulting in lower vehicle insurance premiums.

These are just a few of the ways in which you can ensure that both your human and your financial resources are protected, and that you’re on the road to a successful fleet safety program.