

Confirm Driver Competence

Once you know the employee is legally entitled to drive, the next step is determining if they have the driving skills, attitudes and behaviours that are right for your workplace. Do they operate the vehicle properly?

Have you instructed them about the driving tasks you will assign? Do they understand the hazards they will encounter and how to avoid or control them? Do they have the training and experience necessary to succeed? How can you tell?

1. Driver Assessments

The best way to evaluate driving skills and attitudes is by direct observation. If you have an on-staff trainer, a supervisor or an experienced driver that demonstrates the competencies your organization requires, have them ride along with other drivers. Use the vehicle they usually drive for work, and in the locations and circumstances they typically operate.

Ask the assessor to provide a report on the driver's strengths, as well as the skills and behaviours that need improvement. *The Driver Assessment Form* and *Companion Document* are available for your use.

Some organizations prefer to hire a qualified instructor from a reputable driving school to evaluate drivers. Once you tell them about the driving circumstances in which your employees need to perform, the instructor will conduct a "road test" to check those skills.

Expect them to provide a report summarizing observations, along with recommendations for training to address skills and behaviours that need improvement.



2. Re-assess Drivers Every 2 or 3 Years

Driving skills are perishable – lessons learned quickly fade away if not applied. Old habits and complacency "creep" back in. New technology, different vehicles and changed routes present new challenges to drivers accustomed to doing it "the old way". Regularly re-assess drivers to confirm they continue to perform as you expect.



3. Work With Driving Science

Psychometric tools provide valuable insights and help you understand an individual's driving attitudes. Such tools typically use a standardized questionnaire to determine personality traits - propensity to take risks, irritability, distractibility, etc. - that might translate to undesirable driving behaviours.

Use these assessments at the hiring stage to identify individuals with characteristics that should translate to favourable driving performance. Use them to evaluate drivers every few years to confirm positive attitudes, or to identify opportunities for coaching conversations that will improve behaviours.

4. Confirm Driver Fitness

An essential part of determining if a driver is “qualified”, is confirming the individual is fit to drive. Medical conditions and health issues such as sleep apnea, heart disease, diabetes, back strains and declining vision increasingly cause or contribute to motor vehicle incidents. Encourage and support your workers to make healthy lifestyle choices, have regular medical check-ups and access necessary treatments. Provide a confidential atmosphere where employees can cooperate with the organization and the medical community to identify and access treatment solutions.



5. Applying Evaluation Results

Engaging employees in exercises that evaluate driving performance yields positive outcomes. Every driver should come away with ideas and methods that help them learn skills or manoeuvres that improve their driving - on the job, and away from work. Make sure you take time to review results with them, and thank them for their continued good performance. A little congratulations and recognition speaks volumes, and underlines that your organization values safe driving.



Most assessments should identify areas that deserve improvement (there are very few perfect drivers). Chat with each driver and decide how you will work together to achieve those changes. Include the assessor; it's likely they have seen similar deficiencies in other drivers, and can offer ideas that will work in your organization.



Be prepared for the possibility that an assessment or abstract review might indicate driving performance that is not acceptable to your organization. Perhaps your employee accumulated 9 penalty points in the last year, and some of them were on company time. Perhaps an evaluation shows aggressive driving attitudes that simply aren't part of the image your company wants. What's a supervisor to do?

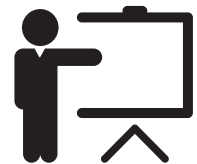


Certainly, it's an opportunity for a conversation to clarify matters, and to identify steps the driver needs to take to correct their driving performance. Training can be part of the solution. But it's got to be well-targeted to address the specific concern, rather than a generic, somewhat punitive, “safe driving class”.



You may have to re-assign that employee to a non-driving role until corrective steps are taken and subsequent evaluation demonstrates satisfactory improvements. At some point, you may have to take disciplinary action, and decide if this is a driver that fits your organization.

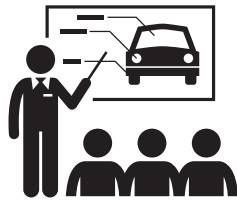
In the interest of transparency, and to assist supervisors and workers, make sure your Road Safety Program includes a policy that explains the organization's driving standards, the procedures it will implement to support those expectations, and the steps supervisors will take to deal with unsatisfactory driving performance.



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Provide Necessary Training

Driver assessments usually identify opportunities for learning and skill improvements. New vehicles, equipment changes and different routes require that your drivers master new skills and adapt their behaviours to new circumstances. Because time and money are usually tight, it's in your mutual best interest to use efficient and effective ways to convey necessary information, and to confirm new skills are learned, and applied. Find the training that works for your employees.



Online Learning

There is a growing variety of online driving resources from quick tips and quizzes to multi-session courses. If employees have access to a computer, they can learn new skills and reinforce behaviours at a pace that's convenient for them.



Classrooms Training Options

IHSA offers public training courses and or presentation can be readily delivered to drivers at your workplace. We have the ability to customize and deliver specialized training to address unique situations and needs.



Mentoring

There's no better way for a new hire to "learn the ropes", or for a current employee to learn how to operate a different vehicle than to have someone who is experienced show them. Team them up for a few days and let the trainee observe how it's done, and ask plenty of questions. Later, get the trainee to demonstrate their understanding.



Lunch and Learn

This is a great way to convey practical advice on topics that matter to your drivers. Sure, the lunchroom is a casual place to engage someone from the company (a driver with first-hand knowledge can be most effective) to make a presentation. Add some impact by having a demonstration in a nearby cordoned-off parking lot. For easy to deliver topics check out our Safety Talks or Safety Tip sheets at www.ihsa.ca/roadsafety.



Tailgate Meetings

Some supervisors see their drivers for only 10 or 15 minutes at the start of each shift. Use that time to start a conversation about an important driving topic. Offer ideas staff can think about, and discuss. Provide manageable information "bytes" they can apply to situations they will encounter that day. Ask them to integrate small adjustments to their driving practices. For more information, tips tools and sample topics visit www.ihsa.ca/roadsafety

