

Big H&S changes for fleet operators

The construction industry is vehicle intensive, whether it's a sole trader's van or New Zealand's largest nationwide fleets.

The construction industry is mobility dependant — you can't do your job without vans, utes and trucks on the road.

Like most sectors, fleet operations and driver safety are often under-estimated or completely overlooked with regard to health and safety.

Fleet accident management has always been a specialised subset within general fleet management, but that's no longer the case — there is now a significant crossover into health and safety.

Company vehicles are clearly a "place of work" and driving is obviously a "hazard", so employers are now having to assess the risk based on their environment and vehicle-use profile.

There are more than 4.7 million registered vehicles on New Zealand roads, roughly equal to our tiny population of humans.

New Zealand roads aren't world class and, unfortunately, this may contribute to our high vehicle accident rate. Last year there were more than 200,000 injury-related vehicle crashes and almost 300 fatalities.

Given that 70% of new vehicles are bought by businesses, this makes driving the most dangerous work activity — fleet operators have a lot to worry about.

Managing director of New Zealand's largest independent accident management provider, Crash Management's Karen Knight, says unfortunately, many SMEs running 10 or 20 vehicles do not even consider themselves a fleet operator.

"This is a fallacy and, regrettably, it means that these companies may have no driver support services in place when breakdowns or accidents occur," Ms Knight says.

"The business owner's default position that 'the driver can call me' or 'the police will come' is no longer acceptable. Robust 24/7 resources are now required in order to support driver injury accidents and other emergencies."

Ms Knight said her company serves some of New Zealand's largest fleet operators and hundreds of SMEs, so those clients now have all the driver support resources, protocols, and incident reporting required.

However, this is not always the case in the wider market, particularly in the SME sector. She says there is no excuse for the lack of



awareness and uptake, as formal accident management and other cost-effective driver support services are readily available in the market.

Ms Knight says there are also a range of preventative measures available from Crash Management's business partners, including fleet fit-for-purpose analysis, preventative maintenance software and phone apps, GPS and telematics, and automated driver licence checks and controls.

Crash Management is also able to provide template documentation to its clients, and work with them to tailor a service solution and procedures to suit any requirements.

Set up and implementation is usually provided free of charge, including Use of Vehicle Policy, driver injury rescue and repatriation plans, general service procedures and reporting, and driver packs for all vehicles.

Health and safety consultants agree that small and large organisations are lagging in regard to

driver safety.

It was also noted that SME owner/managers, in particular, are non-specialists in this area, potentially under-resourced and time-poor, and should welcome pragmatic cost-effective solutions.

Safety managers also agree that businesses often completely under-estimate or even overlook the fact that fleets must comply with the intent of health and safety legislation to take all practical steps to protect drivers and provide the resources to support them.

This will be particularly critical in injury accidents or other emergencies.

The potential penalties for non-compliance are severe. Large and small business fleet operators can protect themselves from this risk very cheaply — all for as little as a few dollars a month.

For more information visit <http://crashmanagement.nz/corporate-government-fleets>.