A NexTraq White Paper

Improving Driver Safety with GPS Fleet Tracking Technology

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Monitoring Driving Habits When You Are in the Office

Whether you are a small business owner or a fleet manager for a larger organization, it seems impossible to know the driving habits of your employees while you are in the office managing the day-to-day operations of your service business. Often, you don’t know that there are issues with some of your employees’ driving habits until after an incident has occurred. What you don’t know can hurt you.

Excessive speeding is the number one culprit in unsafe driving. It leads to more tickets, accidents and potential liability against your company. According to Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, “Speeding - defined as exceeding the posted speed limit or driving too fast for conditions - is a factor in nearly one-third of all fatal crashes. Speed reduces the amount of available time needed to avoid a crash, increases the likelihood of crashing and increases the severity of a crash once it occurs.”

While there are severe safety implications, dangerous driving affects your business as well. Do you really want your drivers distracted by a cellphone conversation? You have your business’s name covering the side of your trucks. Moving advertisement? Yes. Moving complaint? Potentially. And while you may not have those “how’s my driving?’ stickers on your vehicles, most angry consumers will take the time to note a vehicle number or at the very least, your company name. Not exactly the impression you want to give to your community.

A GPS fleet tracking solution can help monitor your employees’ driving habits even when you are busy with operating your business. You can track your drivers’ speed, monitor aggressive driving behavior, pinpoint repeat offenders and establish a safe driving policy within your company to ensure you’re compliant with the law, avoid heavy fines and some seriously bad PR for your business. Before we look at the issues involved with unsafe driving, let’s first look at what’s driving service businesses to GPS vehicle tracking technology.

Recent DOT Cellphone Ban and Other Issues Affected by Unsafe Driving

Besides the fact that unsafe driving can be bad and expensive for your business, the DOT has now weighed in on the matter of commercial driver safety. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) have issued a ruling that restricts the use of hand-held cellphones by interstate commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers and intrastate hazmat drivers.

The final rule prohibits CMV drivers from holding, dialing or reaching for a hand-held cellphone. This includes all push-to-talk functions. Drivers will be subject up to $2,750 in federal penalties for each offense. Companies that allow their drivers to use hand-held cellphones while operating a commercial motor vehicle face a maximum penalty of $11,000 per violation. What does the ban not prohibit? GPS fleet tracking solutions.

Another serious issue related to unsafe driving in your fleet is increased liability. Again, an expensive problem if and when it arises. In a recent FLEETSolutions article, “Can a Strong Safety Policy Really Improve Driver Behavior,” the author states, “Safe drivers not only prevent litigation costs and damage to an organization’s brand, they can even go so far as to improve remarketing values.”

The article goes on to say, “Telematics (GPS Fleet Tracking solutions) can be a great tool to help monitor driver compliance. The use of telematics can provide information on speed, mileage, stop time, business and personal trips and mobile device usage.”

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implementing a driver safety program is recommended, how do you enforce your own standards with your employees? Let’s take a closer look at the driver safety problems associated with running a fleet and how you can address them.

**Unmonitored Excessive Speeding and Unsafe Driving**

As stated earlier in this paper, the number one unsafe driving habit is speeding. Without a system in place to monitor your drivers’ speeds, there is often no way to take corrective action until it is too late. The ticket has been written, the accident has happened or the lawsuit has been filed. Even when you set down the rules, it’s hard to know if your employees are following a safe driving policy you have implemented.

It can be as simple as a technician hurrying to make a service call on time. And while customer service is an important part of any service business, is it worth the potential risk and expense? Excessive speeding is only one element of unsafe driving you can’t monitor unless you are literally in the truck with your driver. The term “aggressive driving” has been used a lot to refer to larger metro areas where the speed limit is thought of as more of a recommendation than the actual law.

Aggressive driving covers more than just speeding; it can involve barreling through yellow lights, following other vehicles too closely or even simply bullying other drivers on the road. Horn, anyone? While we all may have been guilty of this behavior before, it becomes an altogether different matter when that driver is in your company vehicle.

On the other hand, it’s not just about eliminating unsafe driving habits, but making sure your drivers are safe as well. Your drivers can also be the victim of a non-commercial driver that has been speeding or driving aggressively. Without proper tools in place to protect your drivers, how do you fight an unfair citation or claim? It often becomes a “he said/she said” situation. So let’s look at how a GPS fleet management solution can protect both your drivers and your business.

**Using Fleet Tracking Technology to Improve Driver Safety**

Implementing a GPS vehicle tracking solution can help you monitor driver behavior whether you are in the office or out in the field dealing with other issues. Tracking your vehicles at all times means that you can monitor your entire fleet’s driving behaviors or a single vehicle. Once your employees know that breaking your driver safety rules can be tracked, they are much less likely to push the envelope.

While most of your employees may fall in line once they know their speed can be tracked, there will always be the case of one lead foot within your workforce that simply won’t comply. You now have concrete data to talk to that employee, discuss a corrective action plan and address the issue proactively.

Additionally, a GPS vehicle tracking solution benefits your employees that do get into an accident. If your employee is involved in an accident, you have exact latitude and longitude as well as speed data to turn a “he said/she said” situation into an open-and-shut case. This technology can actually minimize the expense to your drivers and your business.

Let’s consider the issue from the other side: keeping your drivers safe. GPS fleet tracking solutions monitor your employees’ and vehicles’ location 24/7. Are they traveling to a remote area alone? A fleet tracking solution in tandem with dispatching functionality can ensure that the driver remains safe and in contact with the office. And this can all be accomplished while remaining within the DOT no hand-held cellphones ruling.
Now that we have looked at the benefits of a GPS fleet tracking solution for your business, let’s look at how the NexTraq Fleet Tracking solution can help you enforce a driver safety program and keep your drivers safe as well.

**The NexTraq Fleet Tracking Platform and Driver Safety**

Enforcing a driver safety program is easy to accomplish with the NexTraq Fleet Tracking solution. Our cloud-based, easy-to-use solution gives you the ability to monitor your employee’s speed and driving habits 24/7 whether you are in or out of the office. Our Alert functionality enables you to set up a Speed Alert for one vehicle or your entire fleet. When an employee has crossed your speeding threshold, you are immediately notified via email or text message.

Additionally, our robust reporting offering, gives you a comprehensive Speed Report that can easily be set up as a subscription to be emailed to you when standard operating procedure has been breached. The Speed Report shows a vehicle’s speeding infractions based on the time period you select. For those that want to view this information in a graphic interface, our Fleet Metrics dashboard enables you to look at your overall fleet goal, or drill down for more detailed information.

NexTraq can even help you with the DOT ban on hand-held cellphones in commercial vehicles. Our Fleet Dispatch application in combination with an in-vehicle Garmin® device, can give your employees voice-guided turn-by-turn directions to eliminate distracted driving. Moreover, dispatchers can quickly re-route a vehicle that’s closest to a service call without worrying about a driver speeding to meet a guaranteed ETA.

Need more great benefits? Many of our clients enjoy a significant insurance premium discount when they tell their insurance company that they can track their vehicles, trailers and equipment. Whether it’s safe driving or recovering stolen assets, lowering your insurance premiums is a benefit that can significantly reduce your overhead costs.

**But don’t just take our word for it.**

“We used to receive 60 to 70 emails a week on speed alerts resulting in disciplinary action. Now, we receive five or six emails a week.” – Dion Calheta, Project Manager for Capeway Roofing Systems

With the NexTraq solution, Acres Group received messages notifying them if an employee was speeding. After a couple of weeks, the speed alerts were reduced by 92 percent (Ask for our case study for more detailed information).

For more information, please visit [www.nextraq.com](http://www.nextraq.com/) or call us at 800.358-6178 for a free consultation.