



PROPERLY TRAINED DRIVERS

AN INVESTMENT IN FLEET SAFETY

By Kim Edmunds, Managing Director, Glen Edmunds Performance Driving School

Photo by Kim and Glen Edmunds

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- > Somebody is killed or seriously injured on the world's roads every six seconds.
- > Annually at least one million people are killed in developing countries.
- > The WHO estimates that 1.2 million people are killed every year in road crashes around the world with an additional 20-50 million injured.
- > By 2020 road traffic injuries will be the third biggest drain on world health resources and the second biggest problem faced by the developing countries.
- > Developing countries account for 86% of all road crash deaths with only 40% of the world's vehicles.

Saul Billingsly from the FIA Foundation reports the following: Road deaths and injuries in low and middle income countries are forecasted to increase by 80% by 2020 unless preventative action is taken, yet the response from the international community can at present be characterized as a sympathetic shrug of the shoulders.

We have been operating Glen Edmunds Performance Driving School for the past 3 years in Nairobi, Kenya and have trained more than 2,500 students in advanced driving courses during that time. The majority of students were trained in Kenya while some training was conducted in other African countries such as Sudan and Somaliland. It always surprises me how many NGOs and other humanitarian organizations contact our driving school for quotations only to come back and tell us that they have a limited budget for drivers training and cannot afford our courses. When I ask them how much they have in their annual budgets for drivers training they usually say around US\$30 - \$50 per driver. So they tend to buy illicit training from companies that offer less expensive courses and the problem is, however, that you get what you pay for.

The instruction gained for this price is often substandard. Instructors have very few qualifications and the syllabus usually involves primarily theory and very little time, if any, behind the wheel with an instructor. Therefore, the drivers leave the courses not much wiser than when they started. This is false economy and reflects the organizations who do not seem to care what caliber of training their drivers receive. They are merely ticking the box on driver training.

“Properly trained drivers not only save lives, but also save your organization money!”

It amazes me that the same organizations who have small budgets for driver training do not seem to bat an eyelid when it comes to purchasing large fleets of vehicles costing between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per vehicle. The fleet manager then proceeds to hand over this brand new vehicle to someone who most likely obtained his or her driver's license 10-20 years ago with minimum training. The fleet manager then sends the driver off on roads in developing countries full of hazards. Is it a wonder that so much money is spent each year in humanitarian agencies on repairing vehicles that have crashed not to mention the driver, passengers and pedestrians who are at high risk of being seriously injured or killed in an accident?

Let me ask a question. Would you buy a new vehicle and drive with worn-out tyres? Hopefully the answer is no! Everyone knows that tyres are a crucial element to road safety. A good tyre for a 4WD vehicle costs approximately US\$200 - \$300. They have a lifetime of approximately 12 months depending on use. Yet for the same price, or less, you can buy professional advanced driver training and give the driver skills and thereby saving lives.

Avoiding High Maintenance Costs

Maintenance is often 30% of fleet operating costs. I think all fleet managers will agree that fleets suffer from the same basic problems; excessive tyre, clutch and brake wear, bushes and shock wear, gearbox and engine overhauls, body damage caused by accidents, and high fuel consumption.

A properly trained driver can save an organization thousands of dollars in maintenance and fuel costs. A properly trained driver can save 25% in fuel costs over the course of only one year. However, if your drivers do not know how to drive their vehicles properly, they will continue to cause unnecessary wear and tear and use excessive amounts of fuel, which results in excess costs. The choice seems very logical.

Advanced driver training should not be considered a luxury item in any organization budget.

The Bottom Line

If one of your driver's are involved in a serious road accident how does that affect your organization? Not only are you concerned with the health and welfare of your employee, but you also have to pay expensive repairs or replace the vehicle.

Everyone has vehicle insurance, but what about the hidden costs when an accident occurs? An organization also needs to consider:

- > Employee medication costs and possible hospitalization.
- > Passenger(s) medication costs and possible hospitalization.
- > Administration time spent dealing with legal issues, court cases, etc.
- > Litigation costs.
- > Employee time away from work with injuries and/or dealing with issues of the accident.



- > Workman's compensation.
- > Vehicle downtime when the vehicle is being repaired and not on the road working.
- > Vehicle replacement if the vehicle was destroyed.
- > Negative publicity.
- > Towing charges.
- > Recruiting, hiring and training a replacement driver.
- > Disruption to programme delivery.
- > Customer goodwill, when deliveries are not made on time.
- > Higher insurance premiums.

Patrick Grant, Managing Director of KK Security Company trained his Alarm Response Team drivers in a one-day defensive driving course with Glen Edmunds Performance Driving School. He reports the following:

“Since the training, we have been confident enough to opt for 3rd party insurance cover on a fleet of 100 leased vehicles in Kenya. Our accident record gave the leasing company the confidence to agree to waive the requirement for comprehensive cover. That alone has resulted in huge savings.”

Morale

What we have discovered is that when companies take the time and effort to invest in educating their staff in advanced driver training courses, morale goes up tremendously. Individuals feel valued by their employers and they often take more pride in the quality of the work they deliver. This affects the overall atmosphere of the organization, which increases productivity.

Conclusion

Esther Bosgra, the Fleet Safety Management Project Manager says:

“It is incumbent upon the aid sector to pay urgent attention to the horrifying statistics and to adopt road safety training

in the workplace, as part of all relief and development programmes. In so doing, organizations will not only improve the safety and well-being of their staff but also, by raising awareness within the communities within which they work, contribute to poverty alleviation by reducing the number of potential deaths and injuries, principally among the main earners of household income.”

Advanced driver training should not be considered a luxury item in any organization budget. Advanced training in areas such as collision avoidance, proper braking techniques, low and high speed cornering, correct evasive procedures during skidding, target fixation, correct 4WD operation, off road driving techniques, etc., should all be considered crucial elements in fleet training programmes to maintain the safety and well being of drivers, other road users and the lifetime of the fleet's vehicles.

Not only is it a moral issue for organizations to invest in professional driver training programmes, but it will also help to increase global road safety.



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