

Workplace Vehicles

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in the workplace. Whether driving is your job or your commute is the only time you spend behind the wheel each day, you can take simple steps to protect yourself and your co-workers. Try these tips to improve motor vehicle safety in your unique workplace.

WORKING NEAR VEHICLES

For some of us, working around vehicles like large trucks, forklifts and construction equipment is simply part of the job. If vehicles are common tools in your workplace, plan for them and anticipate the risks before they result in injuries.

Workers near docks, for example, should pay special attention to loading zones and schedules. These zones should be clearly marked so everyone knows where it is safe to walk, and loading doors should be closed and locked when not in use. Employees responsible for loading and unloading should be properly trained on the vehicles being used to avoid falls or crashes on docks, and the vehicle being loaded should be properly restrained to prevent trailer creep or premature departures.

These safety measures can help protect workers even in low-traffic environments. If vehicles are an expected but less common part of your workplace, all employees should be notified before they arrive and understand where they will be in use.

DRIVING FOR YOUR JOB

Plenty of workers spend their entire careers behind the wheel, whether they're hauling goods or driving between sites. In these situations, it can be easy to get complacent about roadway risks, but they still pose dangers.

- Distracted driving is a particularly widespread and misunderstood problem on our roads. Any amount of time you spend using a phone, hands-free device or infotainment system built into the vehicle can increase the odds of a crash. Be sure to program your GPS, adjust your music and set your phone to "Do Not Disturb" before shifting into drive.

- Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) like Lane Keeping Assistance and Forward Collision Warning can drastically improve a driver's safety, but only if they are used properly. Check the vehicle's manual to learn which features are available and how they work, but do not depend on them to handle the driving for you. You are still your vehicle's best safety feature.

- Pedestrian fatalities have increased in recent years, but drivers can help keep them safe. In 2018, the vast majority of pedestrian deaths occurred in urban areas, outside of intersections and in the dark. To help protect all road users, be particularly cautious in these conditions and always give pedestrians the right of way.

These steps can help keep you safe when driving on the job, but there can still be problems if your supervisor expects you to be available behind the wheel. If your workplace does not have a policy requiring drivers to avoid all cell phone use, talk with your supervisor about the associated risks, and find a solution that allows you to drive distraction-free.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Not every workplace makes driving part of the job, but nearly all of us take some sort of motor vehicle to work. Unfortunately, parking lot safety risks are often neglected and underestimated.

As a result, unreported parking lot hazards can increase the odds of an incident. Harsh weather can contribute to potholes and cracked pavement, which can in turn create tripping hazards or cause damage to employee and company vehicles. One key to safety is being aware of your environment at all times, so report issues like potholes and burnt-out lights to your supervisor or facilities team, and always scan the parking lot carefully before driving or backing up.

We don't typically expect crashes or injuries in the parking lot at work, so we may not drive defensively. After all, when you get used to coming in at the same time and parking in the same spot each day, you stop looking for risks the way you might on an unfamiliar road or at a busy intersection. Always watch for approaching vehicles and pedestrians, and treat every trip in or out of the parking lot with the focus it requires.

Though every workplace has a different relationship with vehicles, these tips can apply to nearly any environment.

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