

Michigan Municipal Workers' Compensation Fund

Safety and Health Resource Manual

Managing Motor Vehicle Operations

Developing a Motor Vehicle Operations Policy

Overview

Use of motor vehicles is crucial to the operations of any public agency and has become an essential element in the delivery of most, if not all services. Driving can account for a large portion of an employee's daily work schedule and the potential for loss is significant. Personal injury and property damage are most frequently the causes of loss. However, the negligent operation of motor vehicles represents one of the few general exceptions to governmental immunity, an exception that might expose a public agency to civil liability and increase the severity of losses.

Recommendations

Developing a sound motor vehicle operations program and policy is crucial to reducing your exposure to loss. A properly developed policy will guide the actions of all employees who operate vehicles as part of their jobs.

- ✓ **Form a risk control-safety committee** to review data and develop motor vehicle operations policies and programs (or add this function to your existing safety committee). This committee should:
 - Include representatives from each department.
 - Gather ideas, information, and expertise from both internal and external sources.
 - Have the authority to address identified risk exposures.
 - Review and investigate all motor vehicle related incidents or losses to determine:
 - If possible, the incident's root cause.
 - If the incident was preventable, and if so, how.
 - If misconduct or a violation of policies, procedures, or the law contributed to the accident.
 - If existing policies, procedures and training programs adequately address the cause of the incident, or if they need modification to address this particular category of loss.
 - If safety equipment, or the lack of it, was a factor.
 - Meet at least annually to review written policies, current training programs, updated loss information, and other materials. This review determines if the program
 - Is reaching its goals and objectives.
 - Continues to satisfy contemporary standards.
 - Complies with recent changes in the law or new federal mandates.
 - Requires modification to reflect current needs or servicing commitments.

- ✓ **Conduct a Loss Analysis**

The committee should:

 - Identify the specific nature of losses by department and for the agency as a whole.
 - Evaluate how effective existing policies, procedures, operating practices, or programs have been in addressing actual losses.

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- Inspect all the agency's locations to identify hazards that might affect the safe operations of vehicles at these sites.
- Inspect and evaluate existing safety and emergency equipment and analyze future needs.
- Develop a policy that requires the use of seat belts and other safety devices. The policy should prohibit the modification, removal, or disabling of installed or available safety devices.
- Prioritize actions and projects.
 - Address actual loss experience first.
 - Prioritize the review of other exposures common to public agency operations, and
 - Assess other categories in which the agency has not yet suffered a loss.
- Develop an integrated approach to controlling motor vehicle exposures that:
 - Contributes to the municipality's overall goals and objectives.
 - Addresses operational needs, such as emergency vehicle responses, that are unique to specific departments.

✓ ***Policy Development and Implementation:***

The committee should develop a detailed motor vehicle policy.

- The policy should include the following elements:
 - Screening and hiring specifications for positions that require employees to operate motor vehicles as part of their overall job assignment;
 - Specific licensing requirements, based on job assignment;
 - Guidelines for vehicle use;
 - Rider/passenger eligibility requirements (only employees and only when necessary to the job);
 - Occupant protection and passenger safety programs;
 - Requirements for vehicle maintenance, replacement, and inspection as well as documentation of these activities;
 - Accident review and analysis procedures;
 - Employee training requirements;
 - Program oversight responsibilities at all levels of the agency; and
 - Mandatory compliance with all applicable state laws or local ordinances.
- Although the policy should apply, for the most part, to all departments, it should:
 - Allow for modification for specific areas.
 - Allow for special operational requirements, such as emergency medical response or the operation of heavy equipment.
- The policy should include, if possible, a recognition or incentive program for drivers to promote morale and encourage conformance to departmental objectives and directives. Examples include:
 - uniform pins
 - certificates
 - notification of local media sources
 - an additional vacation day.