



Driver Training Program Guidelines

In today's business climate, finding drivers can become increasingly difficult. As a consequence, some companies have chosen to accept driver trainees or graduates from truck driving schools. Thorn Valley, as a general rule, does not recommend following this course of action. Rather, we believe that by hiring well qualified, experienced drivers, companies reduce accidents, driver turnover, and operational problems. As a consequence, both their profitability and safety record are substantially better than companies that hire trainees. However, we are aware that there will still be companies that rely on driver trainees to operate their vehicles. For those companies, we provide the following cautionary information and guidelines.

- In general, companies that use driver trainees and have such programs have a much higher driver turnover rate and a much higher loss ratio. Most of the losses are smaller property damage type collisions that result from improper turning, failure to recognize overhead clearance, or backing. However, there is typically also a moderate increase in severe accidents as well. The main problem that this creates is protecting the company from litigation that will ultimately arise (and in many cases, rightfully so) because the company was negligent in hiring poorly or minimally qualified drivers and entrusting them with large commercial motor vehicles.
- Industry hiring practices require that a driver have at least 1 year of verifiable experience and a good accident record. Releasing drivers with less than a year of experience and minimal training, (6 weeks of truck driving school and 6 weeks with a company trainer), is construed as allowing the driver to learn at the expense of the motoring public and can be considered to represent reckless indifference on the part of the motor carrier. Although driver training programs provide some additional assistance to entry level drivers, they do not replace the professionalism and knowledge that experience provides. As a consequence, trainees with less than one year of experience represent a much greater risk as well as being difficult to defend when they become involved in large losses.
- Driver qualifications are the foundation of safe operation. Companies that use drivers who are inexperienced or who through prior history, have shown themselves to be potentially unsafe increase the risk of being involved in large losses and more importantly, seriously affect the safety of the motoring public. Always keep in mind that proper hiring not only protects the company's bottom line, but it protects the lives of those who share the highway with our trucks.

Driver Training Program evaluation	Basic Program Guidelines		
	Met	Not Met	Comments
1. Program is certified by P.T.D.I.A.			
2. A minimum of 6-8 weeks of post graduation training by a company trainer			
3. Training should be conducted by more than one qualified instructor, using pre-determined written guidelines for training and evaluating all new hires.			
4. Throughout the training period, the driver should be formally evaluated at least on a weekly basis			

and the evaluation sheet be included in his driver file.			
5. A road test should be conducted prior to the onset of the training and a final road test conducted by someone other than the trainer at the end of the training.			
Recommended program parameters			
1. At the completion of the training, the driver should spend at least 6 months as a 2nd seat or "junior co-driver" on a team operation.			
2. No drivers should be trained or released to operate on their own during winter months when adverse conditions exist.			
3. During the training period, team driving and sleeper berth should not be an option. The trainer must log line 4 in the jump seat where he can teach and evaluate.			
4. Traffic, weather, and terrain should all be considered when allowing the trainee to drive and parameters set forth as to when and how much exposure is acceptable during the training program.			
5. Once released to drive on their own, increased scrutiny of their driving performance including logs, paperwork, average speeds, customer complaints, tickets, and collisions should be maintained.			
6. Prior to beginning driving, trainee should be required to complete either DDC-PTD or Smith System training and receive certification for attending. In addition, the driver trainer should have attended similar training within the past 24 months in order to maintain trainer certification.			
7. Program must be current with all federal, state and local rules and regulations.			
8. Program must include training for entry level drivers that is mandated in CFR 49, Part 380 and receive the appropriate certification.			
9. Comprehensive records of training, periodic evaluations, and qualifications of the trainers involved should be maintained for at least 2 years so that they can be provided to defense counsel in the event of litigation resulting from a collision.			
10. At no time should more than 10 percent of the fleet have less than 2 years of experience.			

These comments and recommendations are guidelines only and may not apply to a specific operation. User is advised to check with their insurance, safety, loss control and legal department before implementing a driver training program. Thorn Valley Enterprises makes no warranties that any recommendations provided will protect the company from litigation or from violations of state or federal law.