

Management challenges

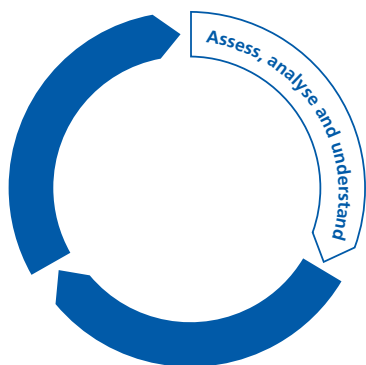
One of the main challenges with any initiatives that are designed to make drivers and road journeys safer is that driving is a very emotive issue, and most drivers believe that they are 'better than average' which, statistically, is nonsense. With the grey fleet there is the additional emotional attachment that people have to their cars, so any initiatives to try and ensure that safe cars are being used needs to take this into account.

There is also a big Human Resources (HR) issue, as many people who opt-out of a company car scheme do so for tax benefits or freedom of choice issues, so any restriction on vehicle choice, or any vehicle or documentation auditing, is not seen favourably by the employee but also can cause sensitivities with HR, especially if the cash option is seen as a perk and not a business need.

The risk management process

It is clear from the issues detailed that grey fleet employees should be treated in exactly the same way as employees using owned or leased vehicles, albeit that there will be more emotional and HR issues to overcome to achieve this effectively, which are addressed later. It is important to ensure that a proven risk management process is used to manage all work-related road risks, including the grey fleet.

The risk management process we recommend is designed to ensure that focus is always on the risks, and that you strive to achieve continuous improvement in your collision performance, working towards achieving a crash-free culture and environment.



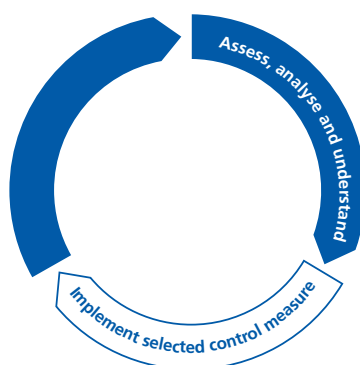
Understand the risks

Assess analyse and understand

The first and fundamental step is to understand the risks faced.

There are three areas to look at:

- Organisational risks (the risks employees face resulting from the driving activities associated with the everyday operation of the organisation) – these can be analysed by undertaking a comprehensive management audit.
- Proven risks (risks that have resulted in collisions) – from a detailed root cause analysis of the collisions you have.
- Theoretical risks (the risks that a collision might happen) – from carrying out work-related road risk assessments covering the three fundamental areas of work-related road safety – the driver, the journeys they make and the vehicles they use.



Control the risk

Implement selected control measures

Once the risks are fully understood, appropriate control measures and interventions can be implemented to tackle specific, identified risks.

It is important that any interventions are selected using a technically honest approach based on proven H&S principles:

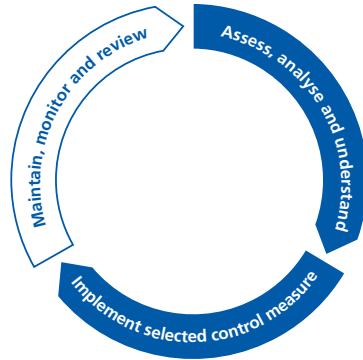
- Can the risk be eliminated (generally a management intervention)? If this is not possible;
- Can the risk be substituted for a lower risk alternative (usually a management initiative)? If this is also not possible:
- Can the risk be reduced (this could be a management initiative or one focused on an individual employee)?

In all cases, management interventions should take preference over those focused at individual employees as these are likely to be more effective at producing a sustainable reduction in the risk profile.

Organisations need to ask themselves “Do we allow our employees to drive safely?” Having the best policies and training available is not enough, the safety-operational balance needs to be right, with the operating policies and practices to back this up. If the operating culture of the business is long hours, limited or unrealistic journey times between appointments, being available to take calls whilst on the road, then this is in direct competition with the safety protocols put in place and the system will ultimately fail.

In all instances, risk reduction interventions must be targeted at specific, identified risks.

Please see the appendix on p.22 for an example.



Continue the journey

Maintain monitor and review

Once interventions have been implemented it is important to maintain the scheme, and the awareness of all involved, ensuring that everyone remains focused on the issues, helping to develop and maintain a good on-road safety culture.

Vehicle maintenance is an important aspect of the maintenance process, and it this is one of the key areas the organisations find difficult to manage with their grey fleet drivers.

It is also important to measure the key performance indicators, such as the collision rate, to ensure that the control measures and interventions selected are actually reducing the risks your employees face. This, in itself, provides

a challenge with the grey fleet, as you need to rely on the diligence of these employees to inform you of any collision that occurs whilst they are making a work-related journey, as you will not get this information from their insurers.

Lastly, it is vital to regularly review the process to ensure that you continue to keep focused on the right issues, and to continually reassess and tackle lesser risks, and by doing so achieve continuous improvement in the safety of your employees making work-related journeys.

Management responsibility

The first question to ask here is **who should have responsibility for managing the grey fleet?** This is often left to the fleet manager, but they rarely have much influence over grey fleet vehicle issues, and indeed managing other aspects of these employees.

In organisations who manage their grey fleet well, the management responsibility generally lies with the H&S or HR manager, or occasionally someone at a senior level such as the Company Secretary. The thing they all have in common is that they have responsibility and/or influence across the whole organisation, not just one department. As such, they are able to implement risk management initiatives

more effectively 'across the board', including the grey fleet.

Policies and procedures

Most policies and procedures that we see are too focused on the managed fleet, and often only include the grey fleet on a peripheral basis. This is especially true of most driver handbooks that we see, which concentrate mostly on the administrative issues associated with using an owned or leased vehicle and have little focus on risk management issues and even less about issues associated with the grey fleet.

Whatever policies and procedures are in place, it is vital that these are fully embedded in the management systems and ultimately linked to employee contracts of employment. Doing this ensures that they can be enforced and the organisation's disciplinary procedures can be used if non-compliance cannot be managed in any other way.

Policies, procedures and driver handbooks must apply to all employees making work-related road journeys and, as such, should focus on key issues such as risk management, with any particular issues faced by certain groups of employees covered in appendices.

Regardless of what is contained in an organisation's policies, procedures and driver handbooks, one of the biggest challenges faced is getting employees to actually read them! Many organisations get the employee to sign a declaration, either physically or electronically, to say that they have read, understood and will abide by the document, but in reality very few employees will have actually read them. This raises two issues – the first is that if they have not read them they are unlikely to act on any policies and guidelines, and the second is that the organisations cannot demonstrate that the employee has read and understood their key documentation, just that they have signed to say that they have.

Current best practice is to carry out comprehension checks with all employees, with 100% compliance required. This ensures that they have actually read the relevant documentation, increasing the chance that they will act on it, and at a corporate level, the organisation can produce a robust audit trail and show that the documentation has been read and understood as the employee has demonstrated 100% compliance in the checks.