Keep employees in motor vehicles safe by preventing distracted driving and ensuring seat belts are worn!

What happened in Massachusetts?

Lots of people drive as a part of their job – some more than others. Motor vehicle crashes continue to be a leading cause of work-related death in Massachusetts and across the country. In the past four years (2013-2016), 36 workers have died in motor vehicle crashes while driving for work in Massachusetts. It's not just truck drivers who are dying in these crashes. Only 11 of these 36 victims were truck drivers. Many different jobs require employees to drive or be a passenger in a vehicle while at work. Some examples are: home health aides, landscapers, sales representatives, and police officers.

Food delivery crash

In 2016, a 22-year-old employee of a sandwich shop died while driving his own car to make a food delivery. He crashed into the rear of a truck that was making a left turn. Witnesses reported the driver was speeding before the crash. After the crash, police recovered the driver's cell phone from the car and a game was running on the screen. It was unknown if the victim was wearing a seatbelt.

Construction van crash

In 2016, two employees of a construction company, a 20- and a 52-year-old, died while riding in a company van. The van was in the left lane of a highway when a tire lost air and the van overturned. The van had only two front seats, but there were six employees in the vehicle. The employees in the back of the van were sitting on the floor or on supplies. Only the driver was wearing a seat belt. The worker in the front passenger seat, who was not wearing a seatbelt, and one of the workers in the back were ejected from the van when it crashed.

JULY 2017

How can employers keep workers safe while driving or riding in motor vehicles?

Prevent distracted driving by:
- Banning texting and hand-held phone use while driving for work (both work and personal phones).
- Requiring employees to pull over in a safe location if they must text, look up directions, or make/answer a call. This includes texts or calls from management.
- Preparing employees before implementing these policies by communicating:
  › How distracted driving puts them at risk of a crash;
  › That driving requires their full attention while they are on the road; and
  › What action the company will take if they do not follow the policies.
- Ensuring that employees program navigation devices (e.g., GPS, phones) before they start driving, and that these cannot be operated manually when the vehicle is in motion. Also, make sure a vehicle mount is used to secure the device and eliminate the need to hold it while driving.

Require the use of seat belts at all times by all vehicle occupants.
- Ensure that there are enough seats for each passenger and that each seat has a functioning seat belt.

- Require more than one trip or an additional vehicle if there are more passengers than seats.

Develop a Motor Vehicle Safety Program that includes policies on:
- Training employees on the importance of being attentive while driving.
- Routinely reminding employees that while behind the wheel, driving is their primary job.
- Schedules that allow employees to obey speed limits, follow applicable hour-of-service regulations, and prevent drowsy driving.
- Zero tolerance for speeding and aggressive driving practices.
- Procedures for reporting and investigating crashes and vehicle breakdowns.
- Routine maintenance procedures for employer provided vehicles.

IN ADDITION, AS A REMINDER:

In Massachusetts and many other states, anyone under 18 years old cannot drive as part of their work duties.

Resources

Preventing work-related motor vehicle crashes, NIOSH
www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-111/pdfs/2015-111.pdf

Distracted Driving At Work web page, NIOSH
www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/distracteddriving/

Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes, OSHA, NHTSA, NETS
www.osha.gov/Publications/motor_vehicle_guide.pdf

Motor Vehicles, Safe Driving Practices for Employees, OSHA
www.osha.gov/Publications/Safe_Driving_Practices.pdf

Distracted Driving for Employers, National Safety Council
www.nsc.org/learn/NSC-Initiatives/Pages/distracted-driving-for-employers.aspx

Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, Road Safety Resources
http://trafficsafety.org/road-safety-resources/#open-access

OH4434