Motive

Fleet Safety Programs: The Ultimate Guide

Reduce risk, improve safety, and lower business costs.

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Introduction

Whether you're a driver or a fleet manager, you know that prioritizing safety is critical to driver protection and overall fleet efficiency. But what exactly is a fleet safety program?

In short, it's a coordinated company initiative that establishes policies and procedures to meet compliance regulations, improve driver safety and behavior, and reduce risks and associated costs for fleets. The goal of establishing a fleet safety program is to successfully execute policies and procedures that prevent risky liabilities and ensure a safe work environment.

A successful safety program starts with a commitment from upper management and is executed throughout the entire organization. It includes training programs that incorporate safety technology (like AI dash cams and telematics software) to provide accurate, evidence-based curriculum designed to lead employees to adopt safety best practices and adhere to safety policies. And a successful safety program is not one-and-done. Managers should be expected to monitor progress, provide consistent feedback, and evolve the safety program to meet company needs over time.

Establishing a fleet safety program comes with many benefits, including improved driver behavior, reduced accidents and overall risk, and lower costs. In this guide, you'll learn why having a fleet safety program is essential to your business as well as the key components to creating a safety program that's right for your fleet — and your bottom line.

We'll discuss:

1. **Why is a fleet safety program important?**
2. **What makes a fleet safety program effective?**
3. **How to implement a fleet safety program**
4. **How to choose the right fleet safety technology**

Let's get started.

Why is a fleet safety program important?

Facts and figures

- There are more than 8.8 million commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers registered in the U.S., and more than 5 million of them hold commercial driver's licenses (CDLs)[1].

- In 2020, there were approximately 415,000 police-reported crashes involving large trucks and buses in the U.S., including nearly 4,500 fatal crashes and 101,000 injury crashes.[2]

- Nuclear verdicts (verdicts that exceed $1 million, as defined by the American Transportation Research Institute) increased nearly 1,000% from 2010 to 2018, rising from $2.3 million to $22.3 million.[3]

- The average cost of all large truck crashes is about $91,000 per crash.[4]

- The average cost of a fatal crash involving a large truck is $3.6 million per crash.[5]

Crashes are costly. In addition to injuries and loss of life, there's the risk of multimillion-dollar verdicts and settlements that can put fleets out of business. Not to mention the violations, citations, and failed inspections that can impact a fleet's bottom line.

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Whether your fleet has 2 or 2,000 drivers, managing their safety performance and, where appropriate, their compliance with safety policies and rules, is crucial. A strong fleet safety program establishes the process and procedures needed to improve driver behavior, prevent accidents, and reduce liability. By preventing accidents, you can also prevent the heavy financial burdens associated with them, such as payouts for injuries, false claims, and nuclear verdicts
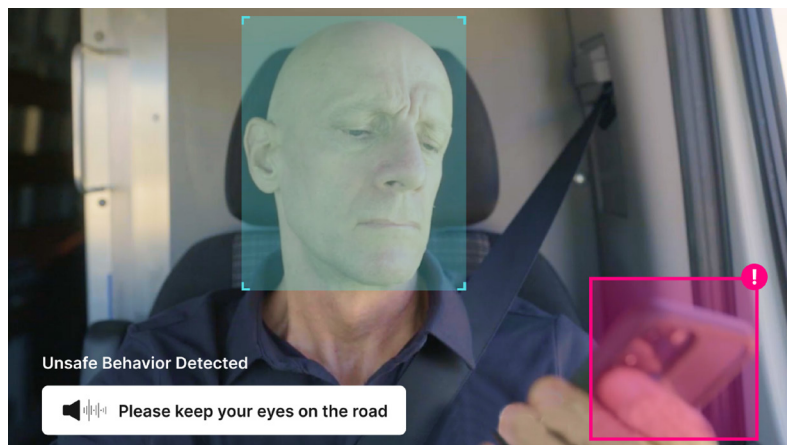
Improve driver behavior

Although there's rarely only one component attributable to the cause of an accident, the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) found that certain driver behaviors are strong indicators of future crash involvement. For example:

- Drivers with a reckless driving violation increase crash likelihood by 104%.
- Drivers who fail to use proper signals increase crash likelihood by 116%.
- Failure to yield right-of-way violations increase crash likelihood by 141%.[6]

Additionally, unsafe driver behavior and distracted driving are regularly reported by the NHTSA as top contributors to fatal vehicle accidents.[7] This makes having an established fleet safety program and the right onboarding and fleet management technology all the more important.

In-vehicle safety technologies like AI dash cams can help reduce distracted driving and prevent accidents by detecting unsafe driving behaviors or road conditions and notifying drivers with audio and visual alerts so they can modify their behaviors in real time. AI dash cams enhance safety coaching and training by allowing the safety manager to review the video with the driver. Together, driver and coach can discuss why the behavior captured on video is dangerous and strategize ways to avoid similar situations in the future.

Unsafe Behavior Detected

🔊 ılılı **Please keep your eyes on the road**

Using dash cam footage to exonerate drivers who weren't at fault or reward top performers for a job well done can go a long way in building reciprocal trust.
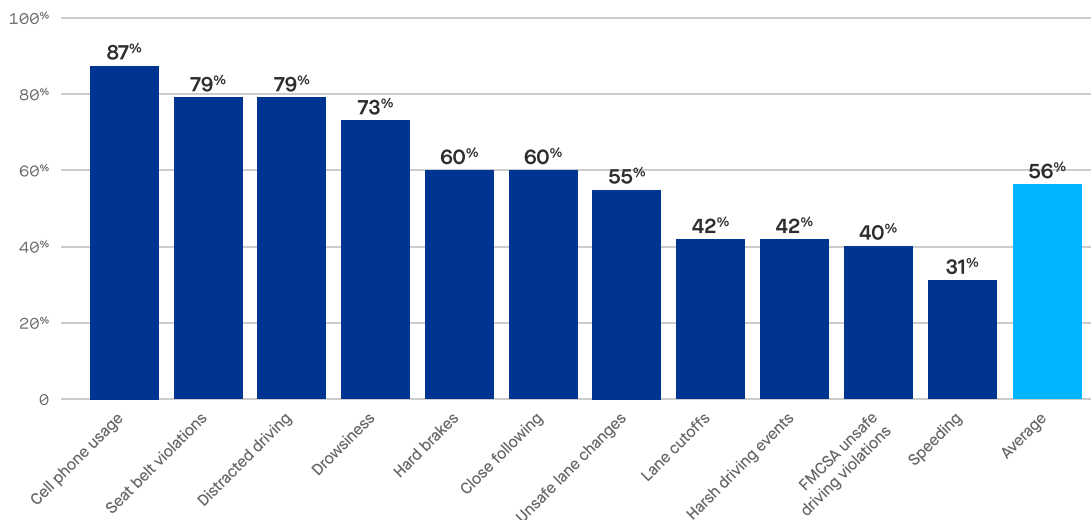
Back-office safety technology, like fleet management software and apps, can give safety and fleet managers a deeper look into fleet trends by consolidating and visualizing data from sources inside and outside your company. Sources can include driver background screening, ongoing driver and vehicle telematics, and internally generated and governmental data. Technology that processes this data into digestible and actionable information can help fleet managers identify concerning trends, or reward desired behaviors before an accident occurs.

Reduce accidents and liability risks

Traffic deaths reached a 16-year high in 2021, with truck crash deaths climbing by 13% year-over-year.[8] According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related deaths in the U.S., and more than 17,000 workers died from a work-related motor vehicle crash between 2011 to 2020.[9] These grim statistics are a stark reminder of how important it is to establish a fleet safety program.

In 2022, Motive published its findings from a 2-year study of 5,000 customer fleets to determine the impact our AI-powered dash cams and safety platform had on reducing high-risk driving behaviors and crashes on the road. Fleets that used Motive dash cams and frequently coached had **22% fewer accidents and 56% fewer unsafe driving incidents** than fleets that didn't use dash cams and didn't coach.

Incident reduction in fleets that frequently coach

In a 2022 study, Motive discovered that fleets using dash cams in addition to frequent coaching had 56% fewer unsafe driving incidents than fleets that didn't use dash cams and didn't coach.

Prevent heavy financial burdens

In 2019, the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety found that U.S. traffic crashes cost employers $72.2 billion a year (up from $47.4 billion in 2013) in direct, crash-related expenses[10] like attorney fees, collision investigations, and increased insurance premiums (not to mention medical care, property damage, and lost productivity).

Nuclear verdicts are also at an all-time high. According to the American Transportation Research Institute, the average size of a CMV-involved verdict increased a whopping 867% between 2010 to 2018, from $2.3 million to $22.3 million.[11]

One hypothesis for this drastic increase in nuclear verdicts cites a growing trend among defense attorneys to maliciously target businesses with false claims, deploying a litigation tactic called the reptile theory. An attorney who practices the reptile theory will attempt to appeal to the jury's "reptilian complex": their inclination to make decisions based on fear or survival instinct, rather than logic and reasoning. For example, an attorney may present a safety scenario as being potentially catastrophic to anyone on the road, convincing jurors that they can make everyone safer by punishing the defendant with a large verdict.[12]

The best way to protect your organization from this, or any kind of financial fallout from an accident, is to be proactive and protect your fleet before an accident ever occurs.

A fleet camera system provides a powerful and effective layer of protection against litigation. By capturing footage of an incident as it occurred, an **AI dash cam** can serve as an unbiased witness to a collision — often with timestamps and GPS coordinates. Many commercial dash cams can record even when the engine is off or power is lost, reducing the opportunity for false claims.

These modern safety technologies aren't just for large commercial and enterprise fleets. Smaller fleets may think they lack the budget or resources to support an advanced safety program, but with the cost reductions that result from good safety practices, along with AI and coaching automation, smaller fleets can also take advantage of these game-changing solutions.

What makes a fleet safety program effective?

An effective safety program can save your company money and time, improve operational efficiency, enhance brand reputation, boost morale, and, most importantly, save lives. But it also requires a lot of moving parts.

Here are 10 elements of an effective fleet safety program:

1. Buy-in at all levels

Establishing a fleet safety program means making fundamental changes to the way drivers are managed. To smoothly and successfully make these changes, it's important to get full company buy-in, starting from the top. When key executives and senior managers show support and involvement in the development and integration of a safety program, it sends a clear message to the rest of the company that the safety program is to be taken seriously.

As a manager, your employees look to you for guidance on how to conduct themselves on the job. Act how you want your employees to act — by abiding by your safety guidelines and policies — and invite them to an open dialogue around creating and enforcing your safety plan. When employees feel heard and their suggestions or concerns are valued and considered, they're more likely to keep company policies and procedures a top focus from day to day.

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2. Customizable safety technology

Your company's safety needs and considerations are not "one size fits all." Your technology shouldn't be, either. An effective safety program uses technology that can be customized to fit the needs of the fleet it serves.

Key customizable elements to look for include:
- Software administrator roles and access capabilities
- User interface or experience (i.e., driver vs. manager view)
- Safety and maintenance alerts
- Data collection types
- Safety event thresholds (i.e., how severe a safety event needs to be to trigger subsequent actions, like capturing video).

3. Clear and frequent communication

Seventy percent of employees say they're most engaged when senior leadership communicates openly about changes.[13] Transparency is crucial to obtaining driver acceptance. Explain to your drivers why you've established your fleet safety program, and why it's important. Have there been too many near-misses recently? Too many accidents? Share those details with them. Show drivers how their performance compares to their peers. Educate them on how their performance is measured.

Schedule mandatory, company-wide safety meetings every month or quarter, or send monthly newsletters to share important fleet safety metrics with your drivers, fleet managers, and safety officers. Seeing improvements and positive trends over time validates the effectiveness of the fleet safety program and encourages everyone to continue improving fleet safety.

4. Established responsibilities and written policies and procedures

An effective fleet safety program requires everyone at your company to understand the roles they play in the safety practices of the company. Fleet management should clearly and consciously define each person's safety-related responsibilities and the criteria against which their success will be measured.

Successfully managing driver safety involves designating one or more persons as safety leaders. Give them clearly-defined roles and responsibilities. Responsibilities might include: hiring, training, coaching, and communicating safety policies and protocols across the organization. Your people are the foundation of your safety culture and the key to safe performance. Getting buy-in from employees throughout the organization will help strengthen your safety culture at every level.

5. Comprehensive onboarding training

The better a company is at training drivers and helping them develop safe habits, the more successful the company will be at preventing accidents. Because every company has a unique approach to safety, even the most experienced drivers need to be onboarded and trained on company policies and best practices. Committing to ongoing training is one of the best ways to ensure great performance from drivers.
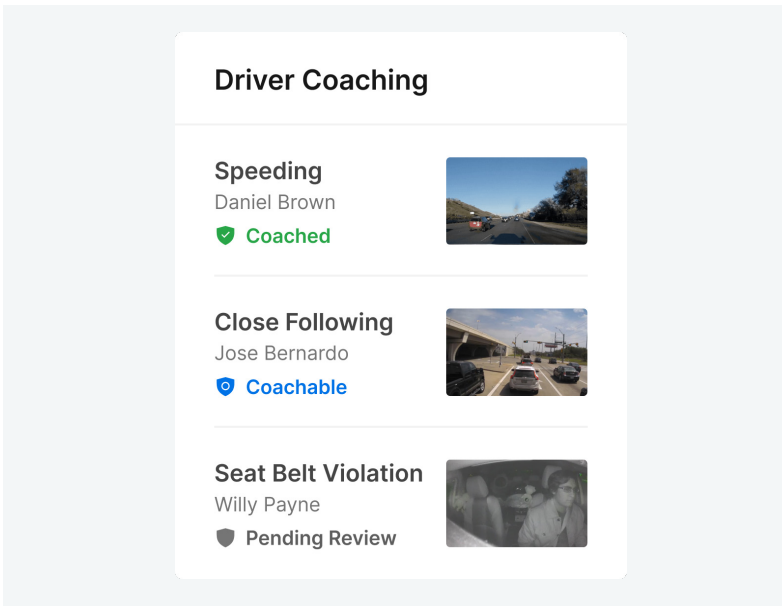
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6. Consistent, data-driven coaching

While onboarding training seeks to inform drivers about the rules, policies, and procedures of a company, driver coaching helps fleet and safety managers proactively address worrisome driving patterns or behavior deficits.

Video-based tools, such as the Motive AI Dashcam, capture video and driver data to identify unsafe driving habits and alert drivers to them in real-time. An AI-powered safety platform can show safety managers when a driver is demonstrating unsafe behavior and highlight the behaviors putting their team at risk.

Were they texting while driving? Following the car ahead too closely? During a follow-up coaching session, AI Dashcam footage can be used to provide the context and demonstrate the potential risk of what happened. Video footage and driver data tell a fuller story of fleet safety. At the same time, they provide valuable insight into what each of your drivers can do to improve.

By reviewing the video together, the driver and coach can discuss why the behavior was unsafe and how to avoid it in the future. A video-based coaching session is where improvements in driver behavior and safety take place.

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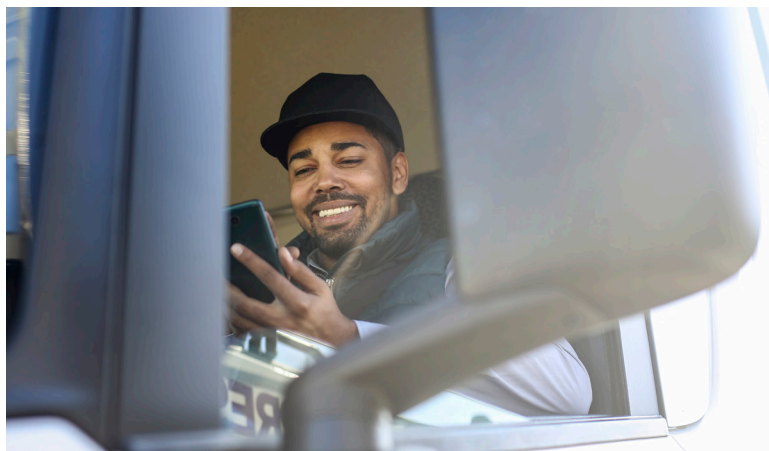
7. Regular driver performance monitoring

An effective way to continuously monitor a driver's safety performance is to visualize their performance data in the form of a driver scorecard. A scorecard combines various driver data based on carrier priorities and creates a score (or multiple scores), which is then used to assess and rank driver performance.

However, assembling these various data points can be a complex and time-consuming process. An AI-powered solution like Motive automates this process to calculate an accurate measure of a driver's risk compared to their peers. The Motive DRIVE Risk Score aggregates tens of millions of data points every day from our network of hundreds of thousands of vehicles to provide insights into driving behavior for every road segment across different vehicle types. This proprietary predictive risk model goes deeper into the context of an event and analyzes additional variables — like location, weather, vehicle make and model, and more — that can affect driver performance.

Driver scoring, in combination with training and consistent coaching, empowers managers to be more proactive and efficient and drivers to maintain integrity and accountability.

8. Driver incentives

One of the most effective and motivating tools for a sustainable, long-term fleet safety program is to have a **performance-based compensation or reward system** — i.e. a driver incentive program. A driver incentive program begins with clear, simple goals that support your fleet's overall safety mission. Next, incentives are built to help your fleet reach those goals. For example, if reducing collisions is the goal, you could build incentives to increase following distance, eliminate cell phone use, or practice safe speeds. Incentives can include monetary rewards (safety bonuses, for example) or non-monetary rewards (like additional vacation time). A performance-based compensation system may lead to a safer, more reliable, and more motivating work environment.

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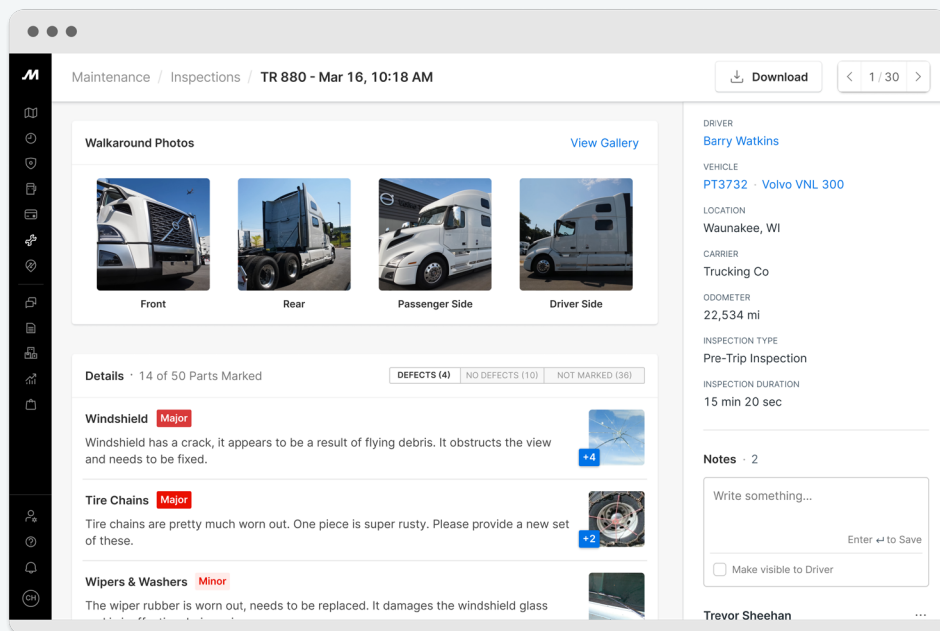
9. Carefully-vetted drivers

An effective fleet safety platform requires a thorough driver recruitment process. Drivers need to be screened and selected carefully in order to build a reliable team of skilled drivers who understand the importance of fleet safety and will prioritize it as much as possible. To find the safest drivers, be sure to look into employment history, drug/alcohol violation history, motor vehicle records, and pre-employment drug testing when hiring.

An effective driver recruitment process can also help with improving the driver retention rate. It does so by ensuring you're hiring drivers who share the same vision, work ethic, and attitudes. According to FreightWaves, the average cost of driver turnover is $11,500 per driver.[14] By refining and improving the driver recruitment process, you can reduce operating and recruitment expenses and make your fleet more profitable.

10. Preventative fleet maintenance

Ensuring all vehicles are in good health is also crucial to an effective fleet safety program. Routine vehicle inspections help prevent unplanned vehicle breakdowns and are an important component of an effective fleet safety program.

Catch vehicle maintenance issues as early as possible. A capable fleet management system can automatically monitor fault codes and instantly alert safety officers and drivers in real time.

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How to implement a fleet safety program

We've discussed the most important elements of an effective fleet safety program, but actually launching a safety program requires thorough, advanced planning. Here are some suggestions for where to start.

Invest in the right technology

The first step to implementing a strong safety program is to invest in technology that helps you achieve your safety goals while improving efficiency and productivity. Two critical types of fleet safety technology include onboard safety monitoring (OSM) systems — like dash cams and electronic logging devices (ELDs) — and telematics software that tracks driver and vehicle data in real time.

Ideally, the technology you invest in should integrate with the rest of your fleet management solutions. To transform your business into a leader in safety and get the most ROI, you'll need a unified fleet management platform that gives a clear, 360-degree view of your fleet operations and scales as your company grows.

The Motive Automated Operations Platform does exactly that. By combining IoT hardware with AI-powered applications, Motive can help protect businesses with accurate, real-time driver coaching and accident detection, on-the-spot exoneration evidence, and privacy protection. It also helps businesses lower insurance costs by improving visibility into their safety performance and delivering documented results through advanced risk scoring and reporting. Finally, Motive boosts productivity through automation of everything from driver safety to compliance, maintenance to vehicle and equipment tracking, and more.

Learn more about how Motive's all-in-one platform and industry-leading AI Dashcam prevents accidents, lowers costs, and improves productivity for more than 120,000 companies.

Identify your top safety problem areas

Most fleets create a safety program to solve a specific problem or pain point, like a rise in at-fault accidents or a noticeable decline in safe and responsible driver behavior. What are your fleet's safety pitfalls? If it's not immediately clear, start by reviewing all safety events your fleet has experienced over the last six months (including accidents, claim payouts, and documented behavioral lapses like distracted driving, close following, no seatbelt, etc.) to see if you can identify any patterns. (This is one example of why an advanced, accurate, and holistic fleet safety platform is important for a strong safety program.

Safety Trends

Legend: — Core Risk — Traffic Signals & Signs — Awareness — Harsh Driving

Define 2-3 specific goals

Crack open any self-help book and one of the first recommendations you'll likely find will be about setting a goal or a set of goals. That's because goals are an important component of any meaningful change. Goals trigger actionable behavior, guide focus, and provide tangible benchmarks for transformation.

Your safety goals should address problem areas you've identified above with a numerical benchmark to shoot for, like, "a 20% reduction in distracted driving." Different fleets will need different goals, but these are some of the most common:

· Decrease at-fault accident rate

· Minimize costs associated with auto claims, property damage, and insurance premiums

· Exonerate innocent drivers from false claims

· Improve driver scores

· Improve driver retention and satisfaction

· Develop a safety-first culture

· Boost driver retention rate

Outline the basic elements of your program

Before implementing your fleet safety program, you'll need to outline its details. While the specific elements of a fleet safety program may vary from company to company, some basics you should include are:

Training: When and how often should drivers complete training and coaching? What about those with multiple violations or chargeable accidents?

Motor vehicle records (MVRs) and driver scores: State when, how often, and for whom MVRs will be obtained and reviewed. Include a method for "scoring" MVRs.

Accident reviews: Establish an accident review committee that includes fleet and risk management professionals, human resources personnel, a representative from your driver team, and a legal representative. Your committee will review each accident, determine chargeability, and assess any penalties for violations.
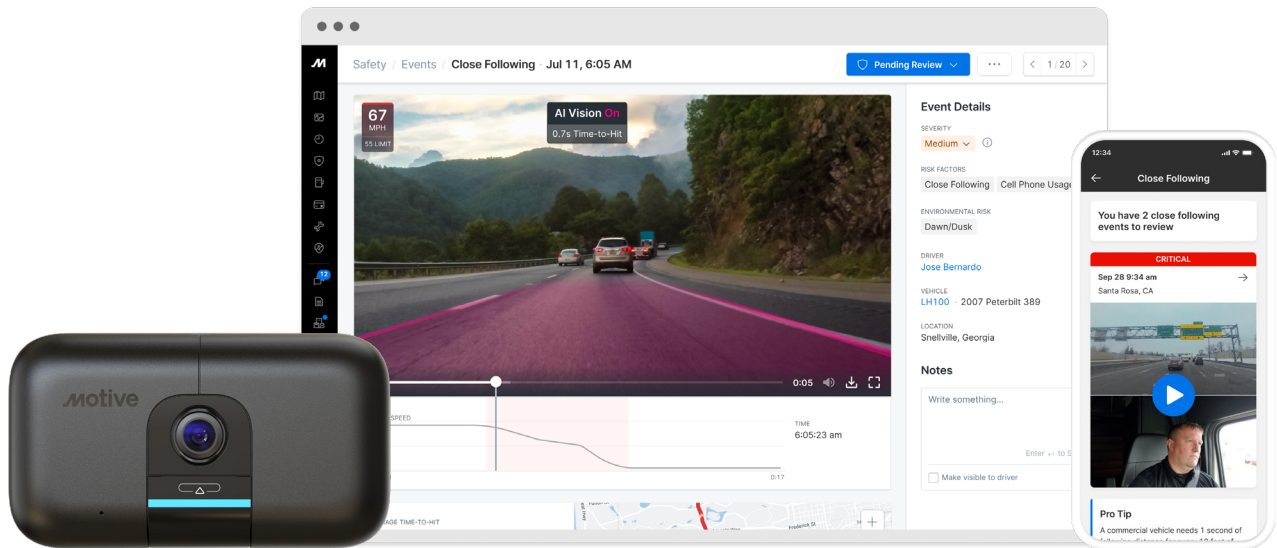
Create an implementation timeline

Creating and abiding by an implementation timeline will keep your fleet organized and ensure fleet safety efforts are successfully deployed. Your timeline should include key milestones to be completed before the next steps of your plan can be started so you can proactively prioritize the milestones that matter most. An example of a key milestone could be "All safety leaders assigned and trained."

Measure ROI

Although a fleet safety program can prevent and reduce business costs associated with safety events and risks, safety doesn't actually generate revenue — it generates expense. In order to maintain full company buy-in to your safety program and sustain leadership support, it's important to measure and report on the return on investment (ROI) of your fleet's safety efforts.

Show your safety program's ROI through direct and indirect factors to capture the complete picture. For example, a direct cost may include the price of hardware, software, installation, or ongoing subscription fees, but the direct return is a reduction in claims and collision repair expenses and exoneration of false claims. An indirect cost may look like additional maintenance by IT staff, but the indirect returns are an increase in fuel savings from safer driving behaviors, improved productivity, and a competitive advantage when it comes to winning new clients.

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How to choose the right fleet safety technology

Reducing safety incidents and increasing ROI starts with choosing the right safety technology for your fleet. Your best bet will be a **single fleet management platform** that offers a suite of features to help you meet your safety goals and save money.

The top four features to look for in a fleet management platform:

1. A fast and accurate AI dash cam

When it comes to accident prevention, precision and speed are everything. Many dash cam vendors claim to have advanced AI capabilities that can do both, but these AI-based detection systems are often inaccurate or too slow. The key is to find a vendor that can accurately detect safety risks in all types of conditions and positions.

In an independent evaluation by Strategy Analytics, the Motive AI Dashcam successfully detected unsafe driving behavior 89% of the time across 342 separate tests conducted in daytime, dusk, and nighttime conditions. All dash cams tested were new and camera positions were rotated daily to prevent bias. For comparison, Lytx successfully detected unsafe behavior 61% of the time, and Samsara 15% of the time.

Motive's data-driven process for collecting, labeling, and improving AI model performance combined with best-in-class hardware transforms driver safety and gives fleets a competitive edge.

Read more about how fast, accurate AI dash cams can help save your business money over time.
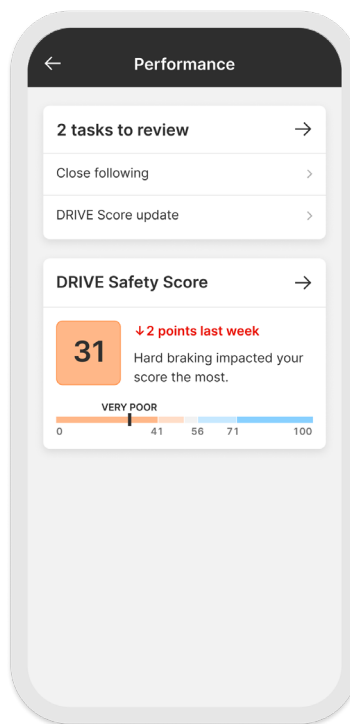
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2. Automated coaching

A strong fleet management platform requires more than an AI dash cam. You'll want a platform that can provide an AI-powered analysis of dash cam footage to automatically filter out videos that don't represent actual risk and prioritize the most critical events. Not only does this save safety managers time from sifting through every single video event, it also increases the effectiveness of driver coaching.

The Motive platform automatically pinpoints important events so managers can easily coach drivers on their unsafe behaviors. Drivers can also be automatically notified through the Motive Driver App of coachable behaviors to review and self-coach. This gives drivers more control over their own safety performance while saving fleet managers time and resources spent on formal coaching.

3. Advanced risk scoring

You need to be able to identify who your at-risk drivers are so you can take action to correct unwanted behavior. The Motive DRIVE risk score uses safety events to rank drivers based on their performance. Drivers receive safety scores that take into account fleet and industry averages, as well as total distance traveled. Fleet managers also receive an overall safety score for their fleet that's determined from individual driver scores.

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You can also customize scorecard thresholds for different vehicle types and based on different criteria, including acceleration limits that trigger safety events and contribute to a driver's safety score. A good practice when setting these limits is consulting a veteran driver to validate that the thresholds you're setting are realistic. Including drivers in the process of setting limitations also helps with getting buy-in to your safety culture and practices.
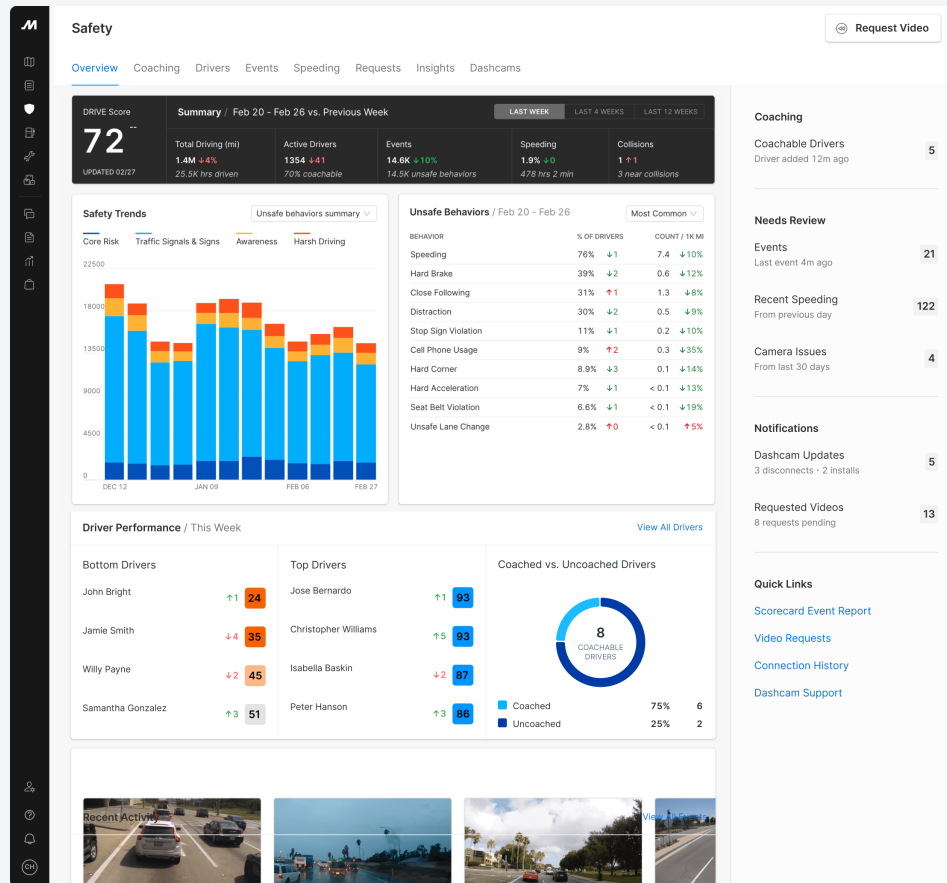
Driver performance reports help fleet and safety managers identify risky behavior, improve driver performance, and track driving trends. For instance, you can look up your top 10 safety violations to see whether or not they were caused by the same drivers or if you have a more widespread problem. You can also look at reports to see whether or not your coaching is working, and change your approach if needed.

4. Unified fleet management support

The best fleet management software lets you monitor and manage all essential fleet operations in one place. Look for software that serves as a centralized operational platform for fleet and safety managers as well as back-office staff and drivers. Integrating data from telematics, GPS, fleet software, and vehicle dash cams in one centralized platform can help streamline day-to-day activities and increase performance.

When shopping around, ask how the fleet management tool will help control maintenance costs, reduce risks, and ensure compliance. This, in turn, can benefit your employee retention and improve safety, both of which can drive increased profitability.

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Improve fleet safety and profitability with Motive

A good **fleet safety program** will not only strengthen your business, but also reduce crashes, enhance driver retention, and increase profitability. Fleets of any size, in any industry, will benefit from ongoing **safety improvements** and a strong safety culture.

Motive's always-evolving technology improves safety, profitability, and productivity. **Request a demo** today to see how our solution can help you cut logistics costs and so much more.

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About Motive

Motive builds technology to improve the safety, productivity, and profitability of businesses that power the physical economy. The Motive Automated Operations Platform combines IoT hardware with AI-powered applications to automate vehicle and equipment tracking, driver safety, compliance, maintenance, spend management, and more. Motive serves more than 120,000 businesses, across a wide range of industries including trucking and logistics, construction, oil and gas, food and beverages, field services, agriculture, passenger transit, and delivery. Visit **gomotive.com** to learn more.

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