

The Fleet Manager's role

From asset management and driver risk management, through to controlling budgets and fleet disposals, a Fleet Manager's role is a complex one. We have listed just a few areas of responsibility within fleet management.

Auctions

Part of a Fleet Manager's role is dealing with vehicle disposals and replacement. If vehicles are owned outright, specialist fleet vehicle auctions can be used to achieve a greater value for vehicles that haven't reached their end-of-life and that still have a residual value.

Benchmarking

Fleet managers should compare their fleet processes against other similar organisations in the same sector to help them understand how to achieve future cost savings, reduce risk, improve their duty of care focus, 'green' their fleet and enhance operational efficiencies. This process is known as bench-marking.

Compliance

Fleet management is anything but a straight forward process and running a compliant fleet means having information to hand to evidence that essential checks have been carried out to specific standards. By creating an auditable trail, a fleet manager can show the steps taken to meet compliance requirements in all aspects of their fleet operations. From mitigating risk by checking a driver's licence to specifying the correct vehicle that is fit for purpose means staying compliant is essential and not optional.

Daily Vehicle Checks

Daily vehicle checks are an easy and effective way to ensure drivers are as safe as they can possibly be out on the road. By carrying out a visual check of the vehicle before heading out, drivers should be able to spot issues with their vehicles which may become potentially dangerous if not attended to. Carrying out regular visual checks is also an effective way to minimise vehicle downtime.

Early Termination Charges

If you are replacing your entire fleet but some of your vehicles haven't reached the end of their lease, you may find yourself being subject to early termination charges.

You can end your vehicle lease contract at any time by applying for an early termination, but since lease agreements are not designed to be broken, substantial penalties and fees are usually applied.

Financials

Fleet Managers have both strategic and financial responsibilities within an organisation. Setting a fleet budget or working within certain financial constraints is a complex task. Knowing how to develop and control a budget is key for both a fleet manager's success and a well-run, efficient fleet.

Grey Fleet

A grey fleet driver is anyone who uses a personal vehicle for business use. Employers have the same responsibility for their safety, just as they would for a company car driver. The minimum a fleet manager must do is to check that the grey fleet driver is properly licenced and insured, and that their vehicle is roadworthy, safe to use and fit for purpose. Grey fleet drivers offer significant risk to a business, this risk can be mitigated or addressed by offering a leased vehicle if the driver is required to drive for work on a daily basis, by enrolling the driver onto a fully-managed vehicle salary sacrifice scheme if they qualify, by offering pool car provision or by using hire vehicles for business travel.

Handbooks

A handbook is a useful reference point for drivers and operatives. It should outline essential information and be kept in the vehicle, for example, emergency contact numbers, repairs and maintenance schedules, through to insurance and driving advice. A fleet or transport manager can use the handbook to make sure all the required information is communicated to and always with, those who are required to drive at work.

Idling

Rule 123 of The Highway Code looks at 'The Driver and the Environment', stating that drivers must not leave a parked vehicle unattended with the engine running or leave a vehicle engine running unnecessarily while that vehicle is stationary on a

public road.

Many vehicles now have 'Start-Stop' technology fitted which cuts the engine when the vehicle is stationary but as a fleet manager you should encourage drivers to switch off and avoid idling wherever possible - especially in built-up areas.

KPIs

Fleet management Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are measurements that demonstrate the effectiveness of your fleet management strategy. Setting fleet management benchmarks and measuring KPIs is the best way to enhance fleet productivity and control costs.

Fleet management software can be used to track expenses in real-time. Monitoring costs with configurable fleet reports allows you to confirm trends across your fleet and take necessary action for improvement.

Loading

As a fleet manager you should ensure your vehicles do not go out onto the road overloaded. It makes the vehicle less stable, difficult to steer and take longer to stop. Vehicles react differently when the maximum weights which they are designed to carry are exceeded. The consequences can also be fatal. Be careful not to mix up the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) with the Gross Train Weight (GTW). The GVW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle (plus any load it is carrying), while the GTW is the maximum permitted weight of the vehicle plus any trailer being towed.

All companies have a 'duty of care' under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1999 for the safety of employees at work. This means that an employer must do all they can to ensure the safety of that driver, including having policies in place to ensure that their vehicle is not overloaded. The Act also places a duty of care on the employer to carry out suitable risk assessments. The operator has a moral and legal responsibility which is shared with the driver of the vehicle.

Licence Checks

Ensuring employees hold valid driving licences is vital for running a compliant fleet – not doing so can have serious consequences. Regular driving licence checks should form a key part of any health and safety policy. The only way an employer can be absolutely certain that a member of staff can legally drive, and specifically the number of endorsement points they have on their licence,

is to carry out checks against the DVLA database themselves or engage a third party agency to do so on their behalf. Fleet managers in possession of a driver's mandate have had instant online access to the DVLA's up-to-date 'Share Your Driving Licence' system. Within complex fleets employees may be required to drive specialist vehicles or tow trailers, again, the drivers licence should be checked to see if they have the required categories listed.

Managing Operational Road Risk

Driving is the most dangerous work activity that most people do, and it contributes to far more accidental deaths and serious injuries than all other work-related activities. Work related road safety is a shared responsibility between employers and their employees and is governed by health and safety law and road safety law.

Health and Safety law applies just as much to on-road work activities as to any other work activity. The HSE state that "Health and safety law applies to on-the-road work activities and the risks should be effectively managed within a health and safety system." Therefore, employers must conduct suitable risk assessments and put in place all 'reasonably practicable' measures to ensure that work related journeys are safe, staff are fit and are competent to drive safely and the vehicles used are fit for purpose and in a safe condition.

Road Traffic law focuses mainly on individual driver behaviour and the vehicle owner. However, various Road Traffic Acts and regulations also require employers to ensure that vehicles used for work purposes are safe and legal to be on the road, and that drivers are properly licensed and insured. Employers can be held liable for various 'cause or permit' road traffic offences; for example, it is an offence to cause or permit someone to:

- Use a hand-held mobile phone while driving
- Use vehicle in dangerous condition
- Drive on the road without a valid driving licence or motor insurance

The legal consequences of failing to manage occupational road risk can be extremely serious. Organisations convicted of corporate manslaughter face very high fines (that are linked to their annual turnover), remedial orders and publicity orders.

Managers convicted under the Health and Safety Offences Act can face high fines and prison sentences. Individual drivers and riders can face fines and penalty points, driving disqualifications and in serious cases, imprisonment.