RISK CONTROL BULLETIN

Using Technology to Monitor Your Fleet

Most everyone knows about the importance of the "black box" when it comes to investigating an aviation accident. The information gathered assists the accident investigators in reconstructing what happened in the cockpit and with the mechanics of the plane just prior to the accident. The information is also used to help other pilots learn from any mistakes that may have occurred that contributed to the loss. This technology is also available for automobiles.

Electronic Data Recorders

Many manufacturers automatically install a "black box" or Electronic Data Recorder (EDR) on their vehicles. Some of these carmakers sell software that allows you to retrieve the information collected, while others do not allow access at all. If your vehicles don't have factory installed EDRs or you cannot obtain access to the information, you can have EDRs installed in your company's vehicles as aftermarket products.

An electronic data recording system records the vehicle's movements, and in the event of a collision, an EDR will store information for a specific period of time prior to the accident (such as 30 seconds) and a period of time after the accident (such as 15 seconds). The system records such information as speed, longitude and latitude, position, movement, acceleration, and changes in direction. This information is recorded 300 to 500 times per second, which allows an investigator to reconstruct the accident. One distributor of these products is Siemens VDO Automotive. You can read more about their products at their website http://www.vdona.com.

Onboard Surveillance System

Another device that can be added to your fleet is an onboard surveillance system that includes a video camera installed on the inside of the vehicle. It will record and store a predetermined time period of the vehicle's operation. The video camera is usually mounted to face forward and view what the operator sees when he or she is driving. The system provides your company with a record of the event and the information needed to reconstruct the accident. Driver training programs can be developed to address the types of losses your vehicles sustain. One company that offers this type of product is DriveCam. You can read more about their products at their website http://www.drivecam.com.

Global Positioning Systems

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) come in many forms. Some act solely as a navigational tool for your vehicles, while others allow you to track your fleet from a computer in your office. The GPS that allows you to track your fleet will provide you with a daily report for each vehicle. The report includes:

- Where your vehicles were during the day
- How long they were there
- What route they took to get there, including all the stops in between
- How fast they were going

GPS World magazine offers a great deal of information about the many uses of these systems. An electronic version of the magazine can be found at their website http://www.gpsworld.com/gpsworld.

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