

Challenges and Successes of a Fleet Safety Program

**Dimitra Tapsas and Anne Harris
Public Policy Department
Royal Automobile Club of Victoria**

ABSTRACT

Past research indicates that less than a third of fleet vehicles crash every year. RACV has attempted to address this problem within its own fleet by introducing a company wide Fleet Safety Program in December 2004. The overall aim of the program was to raise awareness and adherence to the organisation's existing fleet safety policies: the Safe Driving policy and Safe Vehicle policy. The program also aimed to reduce fleet crashes and encourage employees to adopt safe driving behaviours.

A baseline survey was conducted that measured employees' attitudes and beliefs on road safety and driving patterns. The results of the survey revealed that 71% of employees were not aware of RACV's fleet safety policies. This finding demonstrated the need for a fleet safety program.

The program covered all the major issues of fleet safety, such as speed, fatigue, and being fuel smart. A different issue was addressed each month through the provision of educational information, competitions, and activities aimed at increasing awareness of road safety within the organisation.

This paper will outline the results from an employee survey as well as provide details of the Fleet Safety Program that was undertaken, including the successes and challenges associated with delivering this style of program. Implications for other companies developing fleet safety programs will be discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Past research shows that road crashes are the most common cause of work related deaths in Australia (Murray, Newman, Watson, Davey, & Schonfeld, 2002; Haworth, Tingvall, Kowaldo, 2000). Average fleet safety benchmarking data revealed that less than a third of fleet vehicles are involved in road crashes each year (Lumley General Insurance, 1994, cited in Haworth et al., 2000).

Employers have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their employees and to do all they can to prevent or reduce the risk of occupational injury arising from the use of vehicles. Given the large proportion of fleet crashes and stringent legislation that employers must adhere to, it is imperative that organisations make fleet safety a priority regardless of their fleet size.

RACV has attempted to address this problem within its own fleet by introducing a company wide Fleet Safety Program in December 2004. As a responsible employer and a leader in road

safety, it is important that RACV has current and clear policies related to fleet safety and that these policies are adhered to and actively promoted.

RACV has two existing fleet safety policies: the Safe Driving policy and the Safe Vehicles policy. The Safe Driving policy outlines the organisational expectations as well as the obligations of RACV employees when they are driving an RACV vehicle or when driving on RACV related business. These obligations include employees complying with drink driving laws, considering fatigue issues when arranging meeting/work schedules, and ensuring drivers' licences' are current, etc.

The Safe Vehicle policy outlines the mandatory safety features all newly purchased RACV vehicles should have, as well as the preferred features. This policy pertains to all RACV owned vehicles.

2. SURVEY

A fleet safety survey was conducted before the commencement of the Fleet Safety Program. The aim was to gain information about RACV employees' driving behaviours, current knowledge of RACV's fleet safety policies, opinions on road safety issues, and how often employees drive for work related purposes. The findings of the survey will provide baseline results for comparing the outcomes of subsequent staff surveys and the overall effectiveness of RACV's Fleet Safety Program.

2.1 METHODOLOGY

RACV employees were invited to participate in the study via an online promotion on the RACV IntraWeb and by direct mail, for employees who did not have computer access. As an incentive, employees who completed the survey went into a draw to win a \$100 Coles Myer voucher.

2.2 RESULTS

The sample comprised of 309 out of 1,500 RACV employees aged between 18 and 69 years. Of these, 56% were male and 44% were female. The results of the survey revealed that 56% of RACV employees surveyed drove for work related reasons, 42% drove to and from their place of work, and a small number (2%) of employees did not drive at all.

Respondents were asked the about their total amount of kilometres driven for work related reasons, which included driving to and from work. As depicted in Figure 1, the majority of employees drove between 0 to 400 kilometres per week on work related trips.

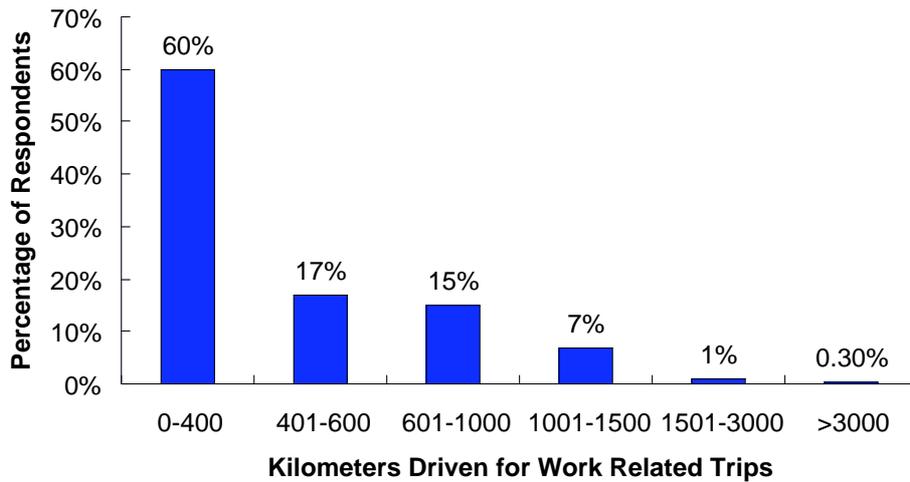


Figure 1. The number of kilometres driven by RACV employees for work related trips per week.

The extent of RACV vehicle use was examined and revealed that 30% of respondents had an RACV vehicle as part of their employment agreement, 11% had a novated lease, and only 20% used a RACV vehicle for work related trips.

When asked whether respondents had read the RACV Safe Driving Policy, 71% stated they had not and the majority (68%) did not know where to find a copy of the policy. As shown in Figure 2, respondents who drove during work hours or for work related reasons are the group who are least likely to have read the policies.

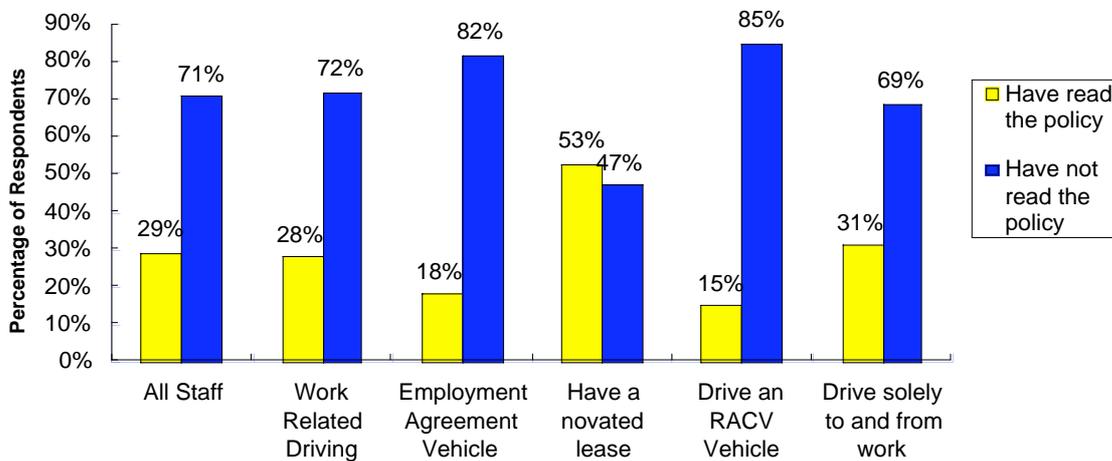


Figure 2. The proportion of RACV staff who have read the Safe Driving Policy.

RACV employees’ opinions were sought on road safety issues. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of respondents had a positive understanding of road safety issues and practices.

Table 1.

Employees' Opinions on Road Safety Statements.

Road Safety Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
RACV has an effective fleet safety policy	34%	53%	13%
Encouraging safe driving behaviour by employees when they are not at work should be an important aim for an employer	83%	11%	3%
Using a hands-free mobile telephone while driving increases the risk of crashing	75%	9%	16%
Choosing a car with safety features can make a significant difference in preventing injuries	96%	2%	2%
Organisers of social events should ensure that there is responsible serving of alcohol	84%	9%	7%
Fuel consumption rates could be reported back to drivers to encourage them to drive in a more environmentally friendly way	66%	23%	11%
Speeding by a small amount is OK if you have a good reason	11%	19%	70%
Coffee and loud music are effective methods for preventing driver fatigue	8%	9%	83%
Senior managers should set an example to staff by having safe cars and always driving safely	71%	18%	11%

Interestingly the results in Table 1 also indicated that a small percentage of employees reported a neutral or disagreeing opinion to road safety statements. This was particularly evident in the speeding opinion where 19% of respondents had a neutral opinion and 11% agreed that speeding by a small amount is ok if they had a good reason. Also noteworthy is that 16% of respondents who disagreed that using a hands free mobile phone whilst driving increases the risk of crashing.

The number of times driven whilst fatigued, in the last three months, was also investigated. As shown in Figure 1, 46% of respondents had never driven whilst feeling fatigued, however an alarming 18% had driven five or more times whilst fatigued.

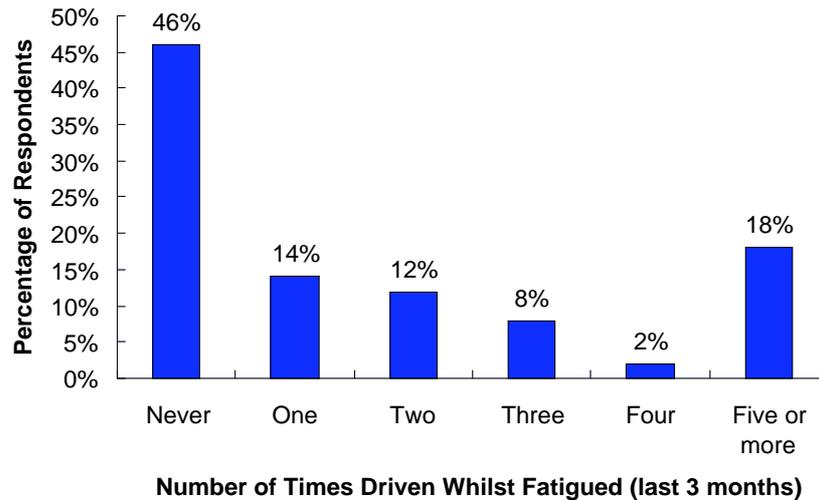


Figure 3. The percentage of respondents that had driven whilst fatigued in last three months.

2.3 DISCUSSION

The survey found that 56% of RACV employees drove for work related purposes. Despite the large number of people driving for work purposes results indicated that the majority of the respondents did not drive an RACV vehicle. It appears that employees are driving high numbers of kilometres for work related purposes in their privately owned vehicles. This is concerning when privately owned vehicles do not have to comply with the RACV Safe Vehicles policy and therefore may not have the optimum safety features.

The majority of respondents had also not read the Safe Driving Policy and do not know where to find a copy of the policy. More concerning is the minority of respondents who responded negatively to the road safety issues statements. As well as the 18% of respondents who reported driving five or more times whilst fatigued. These findings support the rationale for the implementation of RACV's Fleet Safety Program.

3. RACV FLEET SAFETY PROGRAM

Based on the research findings, a fleet safety program was developed and launched in December 2004 that targeted RACV employees. The objectives of the RACV Fleet Safety Program were to:

- Increase RACV employees' awareness and adherence to RACV's existing fleet safety policies: the Safe Driving Policy and the Safe Vehicle Policy.
- Reduce RACV fleet crashes.
- To encourage employees to adopt safer driving behaviours.

3.1 COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

3.1.1 Awareness of RACV Fleet Policies

The Safe Driving and Safe Vehicles Policies were printed in a summary brochure format. The brochure and letter detailing employees' responsibilities as well as where to find the more detailed versions of the policies, were sent to all RACV employees who had an RACV provided vehicle or a Novated Lease.

RACV managers who had at least one staff member reporting to them were also sent the brochure, a letter, and the results from the fleet safety survey. The aim of this mail out was to inform managers about the Fleet Safety Program and its components, to gain their support, and to encourage their department to adopt safer driving behaviours.

3.1.2 Monthly Program

The monthly program was developed using the Safe Driving Kit (VicRoads, 2002). The program covered all of the major fleet safety issues, such as speed, fatigue, and being fuel smart as shown in Table 2. A different issue was addressed each month through the provision of educational information, competitions, and activities aimed at increasing the awareness of fleet safety within the organisation.

Table 2.

Calendar of Monthly Fleet Safety Issues Addressed.

Month	Topic
December/January 05	Party Safe
February	Speeding
March	Fatigue
April	Road Rules
May	Seat Belts
June	Pedestrian
July	Buying a Safe Car
August	Drugs & Driving
September	Mobile Phones
October	Fuel Smart
November	Drink Driving

The information was disseminated through a variety of internal communications outlets. These included a monthly article in a staff magazine, messages posted on the IntraWeb home page, bi weekly information in an electronic newsletter, articles in departmental newsletters,

and information in a quarterly produced CD specifically produced for RACV emergency roadside assistance patrol staff and driving instructors.

Promotional material linked to the fleet safety issues were distributed to employees including pens, drinking glasses marked with standard drinks levels, stickers, etc.

3.1.3 Banner and IntraWeb Home Page

A promotional fleet safety banner was produced and displayed in a prominent position in the RACV staff cafeteria. The aim of the banner was to raise awareness of the Fleet Safety Program by displaying the monthly fleet safety issue on the banner.

A home page was created for the Fleet Safety Program on the RACV IntraWeb. The web page provided employees with links to the two fleet safety policies and employees were able to access information on the previous and current fleet safety issues covered during the program.

3.1.4 Corporate Induction

The RACV fleet safety policies were included in the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) component of the corporate induction for new employees. New employees were made aware of the existing policies and were provided with information about the Fleet Safety Program. RACV corporate inductions are conducted monthly and inductees are given promotional material linked to the fleet safety issue of the month.

3.2 EVALUATION

To evaluate the effectiveness of the fleet safety program a follow up survey will be conducted after 12 months of the program's duration (late November 2005). The aim of the survey will be to compare the pre and post survey results to determine whether there was a change in the level of employees' awareness of the RACV fleet safety policies and any changes to employees' opinions on the road safety statements. In addition, more items will be added to the survey with the aim of measuring employees' opinions of the program. RACV's fleet crash statistics will also be examined for any changes.

The aim of the program was to raise awareness and adherence to RACV fleet safety policies, in the hope of changing behaviour, but determining behaviour change is difficult. Although the findings of the post survey may indicate a change in employees' level of awareness, employees' adherence to the fleet safety policies is difficult to measure.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Fleet safety is an important issue that needs to be addressed by all organisations. Notwithstanding this, there are often many challenges and successors in developing and implementing a fleet safety program where the ultimate goal is providing a safer working environment for all employees.

4.1 CHALLENGES

One of the key aspects of a successful fleet safety program is gaining support from senior management which may be challenging for some organisations. This was not the case for RACV. The challenges faced in this case study was getting the messages and gaining the support from line managers and ultimately employees. Obtaining employees' support and cooperation can often be quite difficult and frustrating even when they were involved before the commencement of the program.

The Fleet Safety Program at RACV was led by the Public Policy Department which has the expertise in road safety related issues. As fleet safety is part of the OH&S obligations of an organisation this posed a challenge. The lesson learnt from this case was that the fundamental aspects of a fleet safety program should lie within the OH&S framework and the program be managed by those responsible for OH&S in their organisation. RACV has addressed this and has handed over the program to the OH&S department.

The management of fleet crash reporting systems has been another challenge. Historically many organisations view crash reporting from a financial perspective where the vehicle downtime is reduced and the cost of repairs are calculated. We have been working with Fleet Management to alter the current crash reporting systems to help identify the reasons why fleet vehicles are involved in crashes. With this information, further programs can be developed to reduce fleet crashes.

4.2 SUCCESSES

It is difficult to determine the successes of the Fleet Safety Program without the evaluation results. However to date the main success has been the creation of the fleet safety culture within the organisation. This is evident from employees' use of the promotional materials and the informal feedback from employees.

More importantly some employees have raised concerns of the adherence to a few aspects of the Safe Driving policy with their line managers and OH&S representatives. This is a positive step forward in creating awareness and adherence to the policies by providing a safer working environment for employees as well as a gain for road safety in general.

5. CONCLUSION

Fleet safety is an issue that all organisations need to address. If best practice fleet safety programs are developed and implemented there will not only be a reduction in fleet crashes but it will also have a significant impact on the road toll. RACV has addressed this issue by developing fleet policies and implementing a fleet safety program to increase employees' awareness and adherence to these policies.

6. REFERENCES

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