Background

About Motor Vehicle Incidents

In 2007, there were 5,853 injuries related to motor vehicle incidents in Ontario workplaces (7.2% of the lost-time claims reported to the WSIB).

Driving hazards can result in a variety of injuries, ranging from minor bruises to much more serious injuries and even death. The following are some examples of possible injuries that can result from driving hazards:

- variety of injuries, including: bruises, cuts, loss of blood, broken bones, musculoskeletal injuries, back injuries, concussions (some 90,000 per year)
- Fatalities (some 1,100 per year)

Driving Hazards and Prevention

While the numbers are shocking, there are a number of actions that you can take to prevent motor vehicle incidents. It is important during all types of weather to drive according to the conditions. Below are a list of road hazards related to the weather, review the hazards and during your safety talk discuss any hazards which you feel are most appropriate for the time of year, or upcoming activities.

Rain

- Slow down and drive according to conditions.
- At the start of a rainfall, surface oil and grease forms a slick film, which is not washed away until after 20 or 30 minutes of hard rain.
- In light, misty rain, the oil and grease forms a slick film that never gets washed away.
- Hydroplaning occurs when a water wedge forms and the tire loses contact with the road. Steering and braking are affected – the tire is actually riding on a thin layer of water. Any one (or combination) of the following may lead to hydroplaning:
  - too much speed,
  - worn tire tread, or
  - too low tire pressure.
- Partial hydroplaning can occur at speeds above 50 km/h (30 mph).
- Total Hydroplaning can occur at speeds above 90 km/h (55 mph).

Prevention: Maintain your tires – check the tread and pressure before heading out and slow down in rainy conditions.

It is estimated that, in Ontario, the direct and indirect costs of motor vehicle accidents exceed 9 billion dollars per year. That’s 24.5 million dollars per day or 1 million dollars per hour. These costs include:

- 800,000 hours of police time
- 150,000 days of hospital care
- 74,000 visits to emergency rooms
- 38,000 ambulance calls
- 9,000 fire department calls

Source: IHSA
Winter Conditions

- The action of tires spinning and sliding on snow and ice polishes the surface. This greatly decreases traction. It happens most often:
  - at intersections
  - on curves, and
  - on hills
- When the temperature nears freezing, a driver may encounter water on a roadway but ice on a bridge. This occurs because bridge temperatures are two to three degrees Celsius colder than the rest of the road.
- Generally in the winter, asphalt is a grey-white colour. Black and shiny asphalt may actually be black ice, a condition where the asphalt is covered by a thin layer of ice.
- As the temperature rises, ice becomes even more slippery. Braking or stopping distance can double with a temperature variation from 0 to -180ºC.

Sleepiness

Sleeping and driving don’t mix. Sleepiness slows reaction time, decreases awareness, impairs judgment, and tends to occur in the “afternoon lull” from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and in early morning from 2:00 to 6:00 a.m. If you are drowsy, get off the road and find a safe place to take a break. Danger signals for drowsy drivers:

- Your eyes close or go out of focus by themselves
- You have trouble keeping your head up
- You can’t stop yawning
- You have wandering, disconnected thoughts
- You don’t remember driving the last few miles
- You have missed your exit
- You keep drifting out of your lane
- Your speed becomes variable
- Your gaze becomes fixated

Quick Driving Preparation Checklist

- Adjust your steering wheel, mirrors, seat, and any other adjustable pieces of equipment within the vehicle to your comfort level. Remember that if the temperature in your vehicle is too warm, it may cause drowsiness. Keep your vehicle a bit cooler to help you stay alert. The best remedy for fatigue is rest; do not drive if you are feeling tired.
- Clean your windows, mirrors, and dashboard so that you have clear visibility. This greatly reduces the likelihood of an accident as a result of impaired vision.
- Keep your vehicle clean inside. Dispose of any garbage (e.g., bottles, cans) as soon as possible. Many accidents have been the direct result of a bottle or can being stuck beside or beneath the accelerator, brake and clutch pedals.
- Have the vehicle inspected if you hear strange sounds (e.g., rattles, squeaks, vibrations) since they may prevent a more serious problem that may impact your driving.

Preparing for the Safety Talk:

1. Review the background information and materials.
2. Look up any safe operating procedures (SOPs) that are relevant to this topic (e.g., vehicle circle checks, mobile device policy).
3. Find out how many injuries have resulted from motor vehicle incidents in your company or location in the last year.
4. Review the quick inspection checklist on your Workplace Safety Calendar.
5. Make copies of the following handouts for employees:
   - Company SOPs (as identified above)
   - Winter Driving Tips Handout
6. Be prepared to follow-up on any outstanding health and safety concerns that need to be addressed.
Safety Talk Meeting Outline

Follow up on any outstanding safety issues from the previous meeting.

Give a brief overview of the hazard based on “About Motor Vehicle Incidents” If appropriate, report on the number of slip, trip and fall injuries in your workplace.

**ASK: What can we do to prevent motor vehicle incidents?**

Talk about any expectations related to safe driving and arrival to work, or clients workplace.

If there is a Safe Driving Policy and Procedures on this topic share it with your staff. Talk about the weather and review any relevant information related to safe driving in various hazardous weather conditions.

**ASK: Do you know when and how to report a motor vehicle incident that is related to work?**

Identify what the driving, or motor vehicle, incidents and possible injuries are that could happen in your workplace.

Some possible injuries related to driving include:

- Fatality
- Upper and Lower Back Injuries
- Broken Bones
- Head Injuries
- Strained Muscles
- Cuts
- Abrasions
- Amputations

Review the procedure for when and how to report an incident.

Note any hazards that are new or haven’t been addressed by safe driving policy and procedures.

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**Ask: Do you think that it’s possible to prevent all motor vehicle incidents?**

Talk about what it would take to eliminate all motor vehicle incidents. Review the defensive driving tips below:

- Pay attention to your surroundings
- Drive according to conditions
- Avoid Distractions – turn off your mobile devices!
- Look both ways before entering an intersection
- Keep a safe travelling distance
- Stagger your car when on the highway
- Turn your lights on
- Pay attention to pedestrians and bicyclists
- Be aware of stopped vehicles
- Plan your route
- Plan your route and leave enough time to make your trip safely

Note any issues that require follow up:

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Thank everyone for their time and attention.