

# Risk Management Guidelines

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## Driving – Accident Investigation

### Introduction

#### Why Investigate?

Driving (at work) is one of the few areas where “accidents” are considered to be inevitable. Whilst we cannot escape this fact we need to learn from the experiences we encounter. An accident can’t be regarded a pleasant experience but it can be something that we can learn from to prevent/minimise future problems. As such (simple) formal systems for accident reporting, accident investigation and accident analysis must be set up.

Accidents may be investigated for a variety of other reasons:

- To enable statutory report forms (F2508 *revised*), to be completed
- To provide information for insurers in the event of a claim
- To allow accident statistics to be produced

The fundamental objective, however is the identification of the **CAUSE** of the accident. A further objective, once the cause has been identified, is the prevention of recurrences. This note gives advice on the undertaking of the initial investigation.

#### When to Investigate?

It is fundamental to reducing costs that drivers do not operate within a culture which encourages them to ‘shrug off’ accidents without identifying they share accountability for them.

All accidents should be investigated.

Speed of response is of considerable importance particularly when it comes to

interviewing the driver or any witnesses, and inspecting the incident location before the situation changes. To enable a speedy response there should be a clear procedure for the reporting of incidents of which all drivers must be aware.

#### Who Investigates?

First line supervisors should be fully involved in the investigation of any incident in their area, even if the investigation is co-ordinated by a Senior Manager or Safety Specialist.

#### The Process

For your Fleet Risk Management Policy to succeed it is unacceptable for accidents to be treated as matter only for insurers. It is fundamental to reducing costs that drivers do not operate within a culture which encourages them to ‘shrug off’ accidents without identifying they share accountability for them. All accidents should be investigated.

An investigation of this nature should be non-recriminatory and NEVER seek to blame any individual. If driver error is believed to be a significant cause, the reasons for this must be investigated. Lack of knowledge, training or unsuitability for the job may be part of the problem. However, these are management and not driver failings.

Only when these have been considered, together with the possibility of genuine mistakes, can the conclusion of wilful and intentional acts or omissions be considered.

The depth of the assessment should have regard for the worst possible result that might be reasonably foreseeable as a result

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of the incident in question. The scope will vary according to the circumstances but should include:

- The chain of events leading to the accident
- The cause or causes of the accident or injury
- Recommended actions to prevent a recurrence

The purpose of the investigation is to assess and agree with the driver the extent to which the accident was preventable and how it might have been avoided.

The assessor should be suitably trained to complete the investigation with particular reference to the actions that could have been taken by the driver to avoid the accident. Interviews can also reveal circumstances that contributed to the accident that would not have been identified from a report or claim form.

For example, the driver may not have considered the rights of other road users, there may have been a lack of judgement, fatigue, or conflicting demands within the job which increased the level of risks the driver felt prepared to take.

We recommend that organisations adapt established methods of occupational accident investigation to develop approaches that will enable them to learn appropriate lessons from their 'accident/near-miss' experiences. It is important to remember however, not to seek to attribute blame nor simply to find out what happened, but to understand why the accident was not prevented.

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## Appendix 1

Royal & Sun Alliance - Accident Assessment Form			
<p>An accident is preventable if the driver could have done something to avoid it. Drivers are expected to drive defensively. Which driver was primarily at fault, or who received a conviction or whether a claim was paid has absolutely no bearing on prevention. If there was anything the driver could have done to avoid the collision, then the accident was preventable.</p> <p><b>An accident is non-preventable when the vehicle was legally and properly parked, or when properly stopped because of a police patrol officer, a signal, stop sign, or traffic conditions.</b></p> <p>Please review the circumstances of the accident and agree a definition of preventable or non-preventable with the driver involved.</p>			
Reg. No:		Date of Accident:	
Driver:	Time of Day:	Business <input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure <input type="checkbox"/>	
Weather / Visibility:	Place of Accident:	Speed (mph):	
Preventable Accidents		Non-preventable Accidents	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reversing	<input type="checkbox"/> Passing	<input type="checkbox"/> Hit by another vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> Hit whilst parked
<input type="checkbox"/> Speed too fast for conditions	<input type="checkbox"/> Disregard of traffic signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hit in rear	<input type="checkbox"/> Towing
<input type="checkbox"/> Following distance	<input type="checkbox"/> Driving in wrong lane	<input type="checkbox"/> Struck by debris	<input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism
<input type="checkbox"/> Assuming right of way	<input type="checkbox"/> Misjudging clearance	<input type="checkbox"/> Windscreen	<input type="checkbox"/> Weather
<input type="checkbox"/> Turning	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure to signal intentions	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Theft
<input type="checkbox"/> Parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Condition of vehicle		
<input type="checkbox"/> Starting and stopping	<input type="checkbox"/> Diverted attention		

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- Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol       Other:

Photographs taken at the scene of the accident (Y/N)

Remedy (what action you have taken or do you propose taking to prevent a repeat accident?)

Previous accidents (details)

Driver's Signature:

Assessor's signature:

Date:

Date:



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## Further Information:

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Head Office: RoSPA House, Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B5 7ST, UK

Tel: 0121 248 2000

[www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)

The Health & Safety Executive

HSE Information Services

Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG

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[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)



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These and other Risk Management Guidelines addressing a wide variety of risk control issues are freely available from: [www.rsabroker.com/risk-management](http://www.rsabroker.com/risk-management)

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