

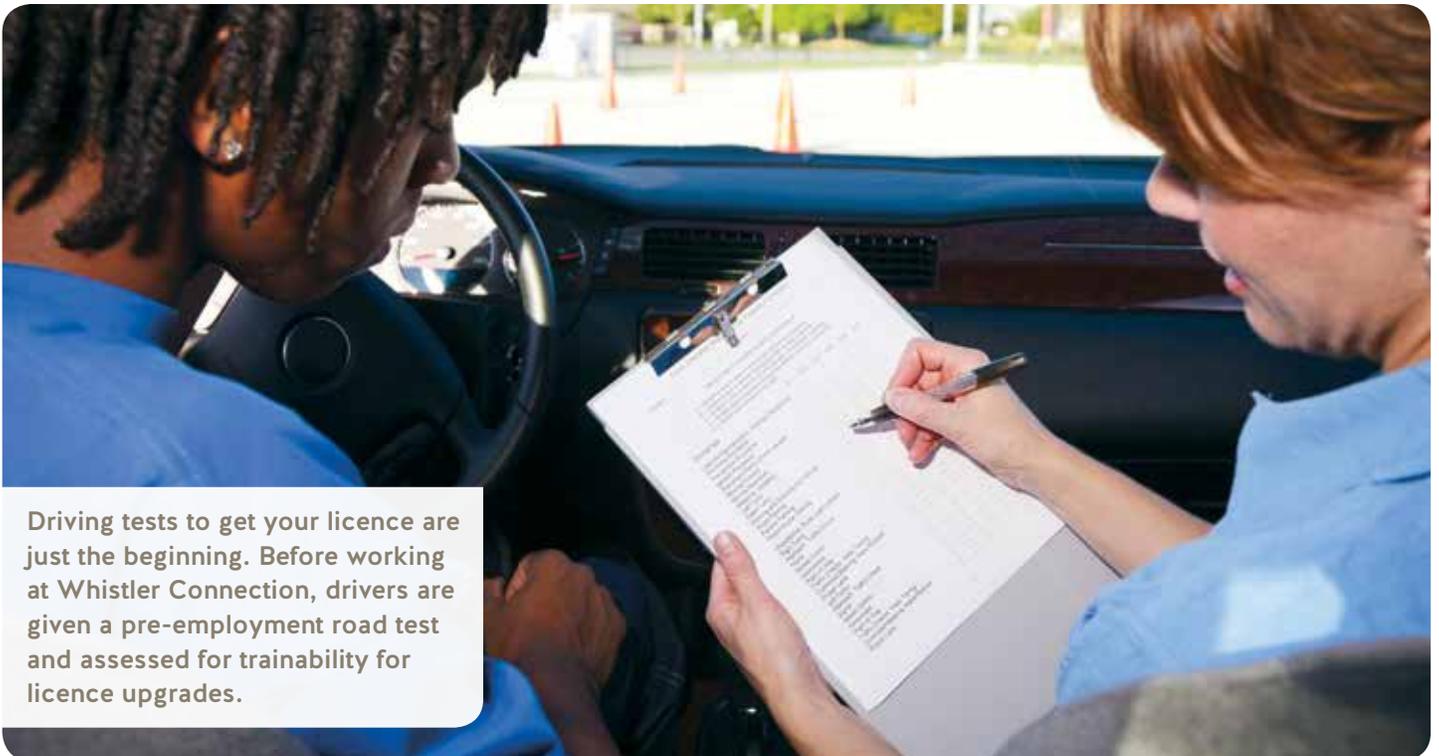
On the cover



As part of his road safety routine, a driver clears his headlights at a chain-up area on the Coquihalla Pass

Committing to road safety at work

By Helena Bryan



Driving tests to get your licence are just the beginning. Before working at Whistler Connection, drivers are given a pre-employment road test and assessed for trainability for licence upgrades.

Whistler Connection Ltd., a Whistler-based passenger transportation company, is serious about keeping both its drivers and its passengers out of harm's way. That's why they have a robust driver safety program and are committed to participating in Road Safety at Work Week this spring.

The 75 drivers who work for Whistler Connection, a company that provides a shared-ride shuttle service between Vancouver International Airport and Whistler, B.C., clocked 1.6 million kilometres in the 2016/17 year.

That's a lot of time on the road. And, considering motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of traumatic workplace deaths in B.C., safety is a top priority for Whistler Connection.

"The stakes are too high not to be serious about safety," says the company's manager of operations and business development Scott Pass.

The right vehicles

That commitment to safety is reflected in Whistler Connection's road-safety policies and procedures. To start, the company ensures that each vehicle in

their fleet is suitable for the job at hand. This includes having properly equipped, well-maintained 11-passenger vans, 24-passenger minibuses, and 48-passenger motor coaches. "We have our own maintenance shop with a full-time mechanic," Pass says.

The right drivers

In addition, the company hires the right drivers for the job. "We screen for customer service and safety, but we don't stop at the minimum requirement for licensing," says Pass. "Through a pre-employment road test, we also assess the driver's trainability for upgrading their licences. Additionally, the driver training program includes training specific to contingency procedures regarding what to do in the event of a crash or a breakdown — and winter driving training."

Pre-trip inspections

Once a driver is hired, the orientation includes a hefty segment on safety. Before each and every trip, all drivers are required to do a thorough pre-trip inspection to make sure their vehicle is mechanically sound and safe. "Any issues that do come up," says Pass, "will be addressed immediately. If the issue poses a risk to safety, the vehicle will be replaced."

Road Safety at Work Week

On top of all that, the company is dedicated to continuously improving its road safety practices, says Pass. While its current program meets all the safety requirements, participation in the annual Road Safety at Work Week in March will help the company fine-tune it: “Whether a big company with lots of resources, or an individual who drives for work, Road Safety at Work Week is a great opportunity to make improving road safety a priority,” Pass says.

Road Safety at Work Week is part of a broader initiative to reduce and eliminate workplace motor vehicle incidents across all industries. Other initiatives include the Cone Zone campaign, which focuses on protecting roadside workers, and Shift Into Winter, which focuses on preventing winter-related motor vehicle incidents.

The official 2018 Road Safety at Work Week kicks off on March 5 and runs through March 9. New this year, registration begins January 15.

“In previous years, the week was about increasing awareness amongst B.C. employers of their safety responsibilities for employees who drive for work. This is the first time ever that we’re asking employers and individual drivers to register to participate in Road Safety at Work Week and take action to prevent motor vehicle crashes,” says Trina Pollard, WorkSafeBC manager, Industry and Labour Services. “We want them to challenge themselves and commit to developing or improving their occupational road safety practices.”

Whistler Connection plans to focus on preventable incidents

Activities can be short, one-time events, such as delivering a toolbox talk on one aspect of road safety, taking a road safety quiz on the website, or completing one of the free road safety courses offered on the website. Or they can be longer-term, higher-impact activities, such as completing a hazard identification and risk assessment, reviewing and updating driving policies and procedures, or establishing or improving a journey management system.

Whether simple or sophisticated, it all counts. All participants are encouraged to report what they did, or plan to do, during the week to be eligible for a prize. Those who report will receive a participation certificate and three participants will receive a prize worth \$250 to share with their teams.

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—Scott Pass, manager of operations and business development, Whistler Connection Ltd.

Vital stats

It’s a fact: motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of traumatic workplace deaths in B.C. And when workers are injured in crashes, they’re more severely injured and off work longer than workers injured in other ways. You don’t have to look far to see just how serious an issue road safety is. Consider the following yearly stats:

- 33** The percent of work-related traumatic deaths due to motor vehicle crashes
- 21** On average, the number of workers killed because of a work-related crash
- 1,280** The number of workers who are injured and miss time from work because of a work-related crash
- 79** The average number of work days lost per motor vehicle incident, compared to 54 days lost for all WorkSafeBC claims
- \$49,000** The average cost of a claim from a motor vehicle incident, compared to an average of \$22,000 for all WorkSafeBC time-loss claims

While the details haven't been hammered out yet, Whistler Connection is planning a longer-term preventive initiative. "We haven't had any major incidents on the road," says Pass, "but we've had our share of minor crashes — hitting fixed objects, for example. We know these incidents are preventable, so our activities in March will focus on reducing smaller events such as fender benders. And that's something we'll carry on over the longterm."

For more information

Employers can register for Road Safety at Work Week at roadsafetyatwork.ca. The website also offers suggestions on possible road-safety activities and points to a variety of online road-safety tools.

"Definitely take a few minutes to see what's available online," says program director Joanna Wyatt.

"Having an effective road safety program is simply smart business. The cost of a crash is potentially much more than having a vehicle off the road for a while," adds Wyatt. "An ounce of prevention is worth the peace of mind of knowing you've done all you can to keep your employees safe when they are on the road." ☺

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—Joanna Wyatt, program director,
Road Safety at Work Week



Whistler Connection's fleet contains 31 vehicles from three different classes, from passenger vans to minibuses and motor coaches.



YOUR PEOPLE ARE YOUR GREATEST ASSET.

Protect them when they drive for work.

Register for
Road Safety at Work Week



March 5 - 9, 2018
roadsafetyatwork.ca

Road safety is smart business.