

On the cover

Regular vehicle maintenance and inspections are key to the City of Surrey's road safety program.

Keeping your workers safe on the road

By Sarah Ripplinger

Crashes are a leading cause of work-related traumatic deaths in B.C., but they can be prevented through careful planning, training, vehicle maintenance, and education.

A well-designed driver safety plan is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to preventing driving incidents at work. Work-related vehicle incidents in B.C. account for over 1,300 injuries a year that require time off work. Due to the nature of injuries associated with crashes, worker recovery time is around 30 percent longer than it is for other workplace injuries.

Yet, employer and employee awareness of the dangers of motor vehicle incidents are lower than they should be, according to 2016–2020 data gathered for WorkSafeBC by the Road Safety at Work program, which aims to help prevent motor vehicle crashes in the workplace.

Only 11 percent of employers believed that driving is dangerous for workers and another 40 percent believed that it's somewhat dangerous. Most drivers did not rate the danger as being very high (with some rating it as low as 5 out of 10).

To change that trend, the roadsafetyatwork.ca website offers resources that “make developing and managing a road safety plan super simple,” says Louise Yako, program director with Road Safety at Work.

“We offer resources such as templates, workshops, webinars, and tool kits that are straightforward. They walk employers through what to do and in what order, and when to follow up on certain steps.”

The program also connects employers with documents outlining their legal obligations, as well as covers supervisor and employee responsibilities, including the ability to refuse unsafe work.

Many employers, such as the Burnaby-headquartered Ventana Construction Corporation, are making use of this online resource.

Practical driver education

A builder of multi-family homes, commercial/industrial properties, and institutions, Ventana has a workforce of approximately 185 employees and operates three company-owned vehicles. It also has 30 employees who drive their own vehicles — sometimes called grey fleet vehicles — for work purposes. The distances

drivers travel are typically short and mainly within metropolitan centres. Driving duties could include driving between locations to ferry supplies or equipment, or heading from the worksite to the office to do clerical work.

Education is the bedrock of the company's approach to road safety, says health, safety, and environment manager Justin Leisle. Before workers get behind the wheel, Ventana takes them through driver on-boarding. Toolbox talks cover safety topics and they use real-life examples from the road shared by employees, Leisle adds.

“I often try to download dashcam footage from my own vehicle if there was a situation or incident that I believe would be beneficial to share with others.”

One personal example Leisle shared with his team was a close call that occurred while proceeding through an uncontrolled intersection during rush hour. While driving down the curb lane, traffic in the two adjacent lanes was stopped. Leisle slowed, in case a vehicle was pulling through the intersection or a pedestrian was crossing. In this case, a vehicle pulled blindly into his path, but a collision and potential serious injuries to himself and occupants of the other vehicle were avoided. Experiences like these go beyond a basic understanding of the rules of the road, Leisle says.

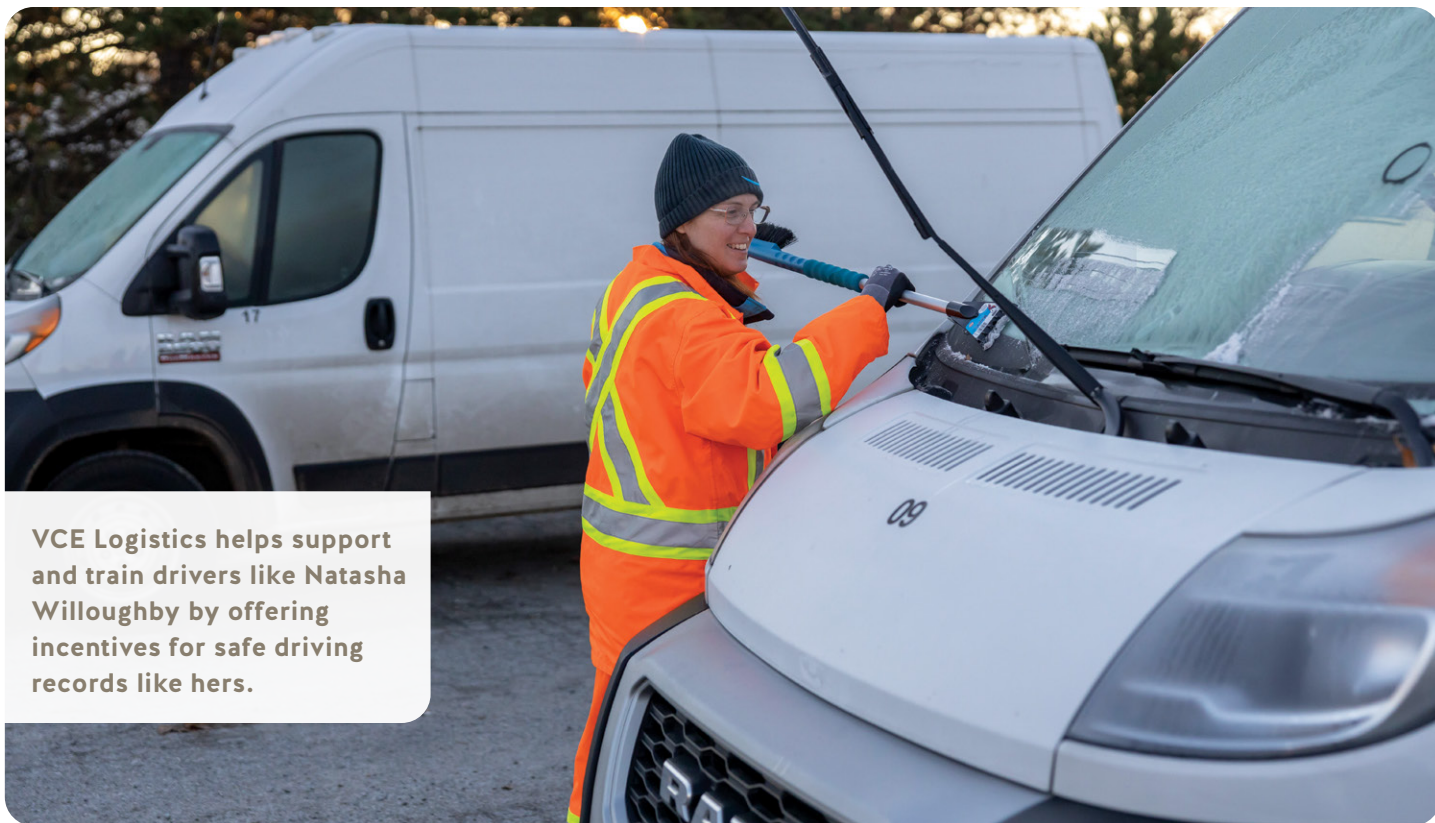
“We focus on education and the *why* behind what we're training them on. The reason for this is that we want open, honest, transparent communication between our employees.”

Work vehicles are workplaces

Work vehicles of all kinds are workplaces and have health and safety regulations that employers must follow before their employees get behind the wheel.

Around 64 percent of B.C. employers have some workers whose role involves driving their own vehicles for work. Under the *Workers Compensation Act*, employers are responsible for ensuring employee safety while driving, regardless of whether the vehicle is personally or employer owned.

For employers, the benefits of a robust and well-thought-out driver safety plan are clear. It can keep insurance premiums in check and avoid time loss due to injury, as well as the need to repair or replace damaged equipment. Most importantly, it can prevent the “immeasurable personal and societal costs of



VCE Logistics helps support and train drivers like Natasha Willoughby by offering incentives for safe driving records like hers.

crashes,” notes Yako. “The pain, loss, and mental trauma often change lives forever.”

“The message here is that employers should not wait to see what a vehicle incident might look like,” Yako adds. “It is much better to be proactive and try to prevent these crashes before they happen.”

A clear map to success

Properly training employees on the rules of the road, maintaining vehicles, following up after incidents, and revising road safety guidelines to fill any identified gaps are the cornerstones of the City of Surrey’s Engineering Department, Operations Division. Matthew Brown, the division’s streets manager, central and traffic operations, says the city puts a great deal of time and effort into training and on-boarding new hires.

“Our orientation used to be a couple of hours, but now we take our time and slowly on-board workers into vehicles,” Brown says. “We also make mentors available to them.”

Training depends on the size and type of vehicle. Surrey’s fleet comprises 24 tandem trucks, two street sweepers, as well as one-ton trucks, painting trucks, snowploughs, half-ton trucks, and SUVs, and cars.

Driver training is matched to the learning curve and potential hazards of the vehicle, and usually takes anywhere from several hours to two days. Before conducting their duties solo, workers are joined by a mentor for their first two weeks on the job.

A well-established reporting process and follow-ups are a big part of Surrey’s Occupational Health and Safety Committee’s approach to their road safety plan. Following an incident, the driver reports to their supervisor and fills out an extensive incident report, including drawing diagrams of the crash site.

“Our health and safety team reviews all of the information and then closes the loop, updating training docs or providing more driver training to the worker if needed,” says Brown. “Particularly with younger staff, the feedback we’ve received has been that they feel more confident and comfortable with the equipment after completing the training.”

Driving with a digital boost

Technology is the core of driver training at VCE Logistics, an Amazon delivery service. Incorporated in 2019, the company expanded from 5 trucks to a fleet of over 55 company-owned and operated vehicles deployed from either VCE Logistics or its sister company, Interior Express, by March 2022.

“We have a safety-first culture and champion safety in every circumstance,” says VCE Logistics owner Hernan (Johnny Jett) Rose.

Rose’s fleet is equipped with GPS-driven telemetry and artificial intelligence (AI) dashcams. Telemetry systems gather real-time data from vehicles using remote sensors.

AI dashcams alert drivers with a sound whenever their driving speed exceeds the posted limit or they engage in any other unsafe driving behaviour, says Rose. This data is shared with VCE Logistics monitors.

Company trainers also do hands-on training for new drivers by driving behind a delivery truck for around 20 minutes to observe the driver performing their duties. They then follow up with the driver not just to cover what’s wrong, but also to go over what the driver did right.

“A lot of the time, the trainer will praise the driver for their efforts and diligence in terms of doing things properly,” says Rose. “And, if not, then we coach them; because, most workers are trying to do the right thing and want to hear they’re good at their job and are valued. So we want to be able to get them to that point and reinforce what they are doing right.”

The reward for zero incidents, speeding tickets, or damage to vehicles within employees’ semi-monthly pay periods is a bonus on their pay cheques.

If a driver is ever feeling tired, sick, or otherwise unable to perform their duties, dispatch managers will send a “rescue” to replace them.

These processes, data-driven tools, and training reinforce the importance of safe driving in the workplace, says Rose. They have also lowered vehicle incidents and damage by 80 percent, and resulted in only one photo radar speeding ticket since mid-2020.

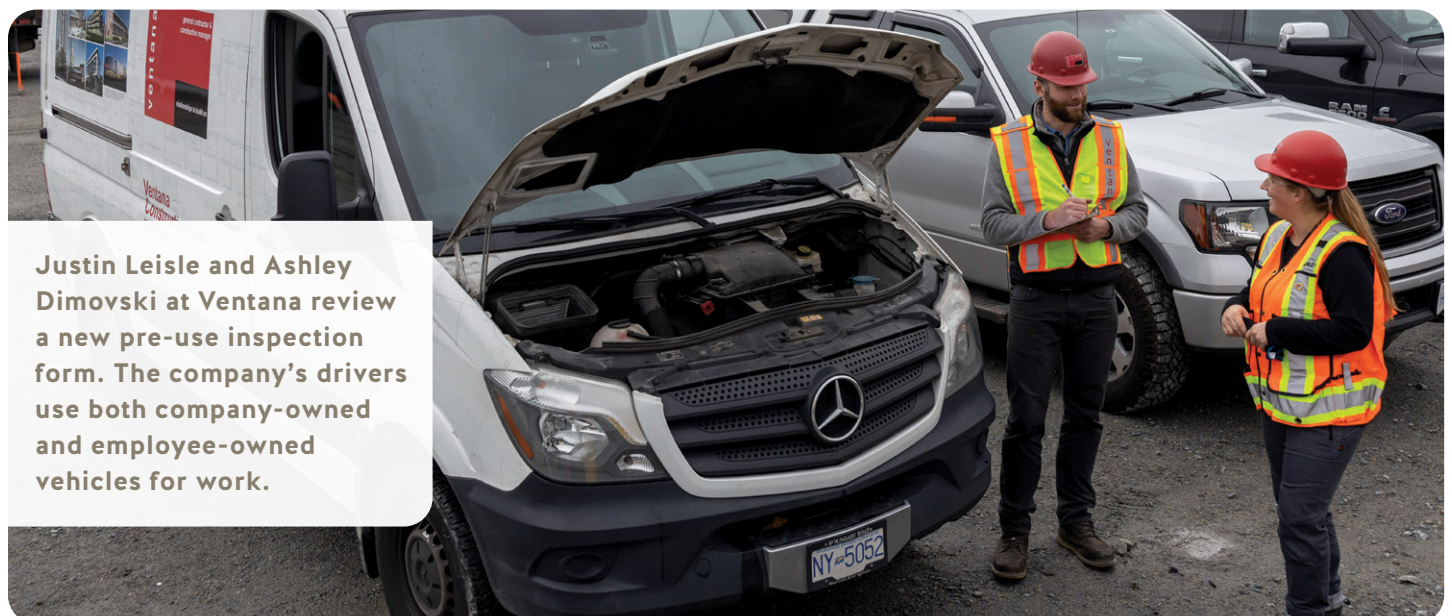
Fleet vehicles are inspected both pre- and post-trip by drivers, as well as audited by the company’s lot attendant at the end of each day and again in the morning before drivers arrive for work, says Rose.

Detailed records of service performed on vehicles and required service intervals are managed by the operations/fleet manager. When needed, fleet support vehicles stocked with tools, a jack, a compressor, a battery booster, and extra tires can be dispatched to make repairs.

“We’re always there supporting our drivers and letting them know they’re not alone and that they are part of a cohesive team,” says Rose. “Our road safety policies are there for the benefit of our drivers, to help make them safer. It’s our workplace culture. It’s who we are, and it’s what we do.”

For more information

To learn more about the Road Safety at Work program, funded by WorkSafeBC and managed by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, visit roadsafetyatwork.ca. 🌐



Justin Leisle and Ashley Dimovski at Ventana review a new pre-use inspection form. The company’s drivers use both company-owned and employee-owned vehicles for work.

10 Road Safety at Work essentials

Ten tips from Road Safety at Work:

- 1 Understand your responsibilities for all employees who drive for work.
- 2 Establish management commitment.
- 3 Engage and communicate with employees.
- 4 Identify driving-related hazards, evaluate risks, and define safety measures: driver, vehicle, and journey.
- 5 Develop road safety policies and safe work procedures (SWPs).
- 6 Establish driver selection criteria and a regular driver-review process.
- 7 Adopt rigorous vehicle selection, inspection, and maintenance processes.
- 8 Adopt an incident-management process and make sure incidents are effectively reported, investigated and followed up.
- 9 Establish how you will deliver, monitor, and administer your road safety program.
- 10 Regularly evaluate program effectiveness and make improvements.



The BC Construction Safety Alliance is a not-for-profit association that provides services to over 52,000 construction companies employing over 220,000 workers.

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