

Babcock's training scheme targets drivers without access to computers

TOOLBOX TALKS DRIVE SAFETY MESSAGE



By John Charles

Many businesses employ light commercial vehicle drivers located around the country who don't have access to computers. It can make implementing any type of occupational road driving programme difficult.

But one business with 800 van drivers working out of 65 locations nationwide has overcome the hurdle by adopting a seemingly unique approach through toolbox talks using a series of five- to seven-minute videos in which its own drivers star and key safety issues are highlighted.

Working in partnership with Drive Smarter, a specialist training solutions provider, Babcock Infrastructure, a division of the leading engineering support services organisation, has launched its new safer driving programme as part of its Home Safe Every Day philosophy.

The programme has four themed toolbox talks delivered quarterly over 12 months concluding in the first half of 2013. Each toolbox talk lasts 20-30 minutes and is composed of a five to seven minute video and a discussion based on the video. It concludes with a 10-question multiple choice quiz.

The themes of the specially-shot four videos, which feature Babcock drivers and vehicles with an introduction by a director or senior manager, are:

■ **Slow speed manoeuvring and reversing** The majority of the unit's

incidents are classed as 'avoidable low speed and reversing' resulting in particular in bumper and wing damage. Reducing such incidents will cut repair costs, vehicle downtime and replacement vehicle hire charges.

■ **The rules of the road** Highlighting key aspects of the Highway Code as well as Babcock's own driving procedures such as a ban on mobile phone use.

■ **Hazards and distractions** Drivers encounter three types of hazards when driving: physical road features such as junctions and bends; the position and movement of other road users; and weather conditions. Good observation gives drivers more time to react to potential hazards. The video also focuses on driver fatigue and distractions.

■ **COAST** The concept focuses on **C**are, **O**bservation and **A**nticipation giving **S**pace and **T**ime when driving. Babcock says a good driver will be observant, will anticipate and will be 'a true ambassador for the company'.

Angus Beveridge, assurance director at Babcock Infrastructure, says in the introduction to the first video: "The safer driving programme is a key component in making sure that everyone goes home safe every day.

"We were keen to build in plenty of opportunity for open discussion and debate, rather than creating something and telling everyone, 'this is how it's going to be'. The opportunity to share personal experiences is likely to be just as important a part of the programme as the more formal components."



Angus Beveridge: 'safer driving programme is a key component'



Ian Pinkney: 'the interaction during talks on road safety is good'

Smarter's experience and the expertise of Professor Steve Stradling, Professor of Transport Psychology at Edinburgh Napier University and attached to the University's Transport Research Institute.

Pinkney says: "When you have a body of men you have to engage them and we have found that toolbox talks do that. The interaction during them is good and the talks are part of their working day. These talks are raising the profile of company vehicles and I believe they are the way forward."

Sustainable safe driving

Two weeks before attending a toolbox talk, the driver receives a newsletter highlighting issues that will be raised during the video, discussion and quiz.

After drivers attending one of the site-based toolbox talks have watched the video, a site or area manager moderates a discussion that encourages participants to give their feedback on the company-wide process of improving driver safety. A 'cue sheet' based on the video further helps the discussion with the aim of creating an ongoing sustainable safe driving programme.

Pinkney says: "There is an emotional attachment to driving, so the discussions have proved to be very interactive. It is a subject that everyone has a view on and wants to get involved with. The response has been very positive."

Finally, the toolbox talk is completed with a quiz based on the video with the results analysed by Drive Smarter and inputted for access by Babcock for report compilation.

Pinkney says: "The quiz data provides an audit trail for Babcock. The questions are not set to catch drivers out, but they will show trends. We would expect drivers to correctly answer at least seven of the 10 questions. However, if deficiencies are highlighted we will recommend further training. To date we have not had any drivers that have not scored well."

Six to nine months into the programme and Drive Smarter will re-analyse the unit's insurance records to see if the number, cost and severity of incidents has declined. It will also survey each of the sites to find out first hand from drivers the effectiveness of the initiative.

Once the toolbox talks are completed, Babcock Infrastructure is hoping for a 10-15% incident reduction over the following two to three years with, significantly, the cost savings more than funding the programme.

Pinkney says: "The programme is not a one-off. When this four-module phase concludes in 2013, there must be follow-ups to ensure sustainability. What comes next will be determined by insurance data and the survey."

Andy Turner, managing director of Drive Smarter, adds "Using Babcock vehicles and drivers in the videos was extremely important because it has proved to be a very effective way of engaging the workforce. In addition, a video introduction from a director or senior manager means there is top-level buy-in to the safe driving approach adopted by the company.

"It is very impressive to see a company such as Babcock invest so much in safe driving. It is not just a box-ticking exercise for the company; it is something the directors and senior management are passionate about.

"The approach that the Babcock Infrastructure has taken is unusual and we believe unique, but we must make sure that it is cost effective."

And, he says: "I can see the approach that Babcock is taking growing in popularity, particularly for van drivers who tend to be permanently mobile without computer access. Additionally, the Babcock drivers are attending toolbox talks in a group environment which is a good forum for learning."

The programme, launched in early summer, has already been deemed such a success that Drive Smarter is now discussing with Babcock Infrastructure in Germany the possibility of introducing a similar initiative. It would involve about 200 van drivers with the films remade in German.



Fact File

Company: Babcock
 Divisional transport manager: Ian Pinkney
 LCV fleet size: 806
 LCV brands on fleets: Fiat Doblo, Scudo, Fiorino; Mercedes-Benz Sprinter
 Annual mileage per van: fewer than 6,000

"I can see the approach that Babcock is taking growing in popularity"

Andy Turner, Drive Smarter

Drive Smarter began working with Babcock five years ago. An online driver training programme was delivered to both Babcock Nuclear and subsequently 100 'grey fleet' car drivers within Babcock Infrastructure.

A further quarterly e-learning refresher programme for 100 company car drivers in the unit travelling more than 25,000 business miles a year has also recently been introduced.

Ian Pinkney, divisional transport manager for Babcock Infrastructure, says: "Getting the safe driving message out to 800 tradesmen who were not PC users and were spread across 65 locations required a new approach."

The company's fleet of 800 light commercial vehicles – Fiat Doblo, Scudo and Fiorino and Mercedes-Benz Sprinters – are driven by skilled tradesmen undertaking maintenance work on Ministry of Defence sites across the UK.

Although vehicles are averaging fewer than 6,000 miles a year, including home-to-work journeys, the fleet has doubled in size in the past three years due to contract wins and Pinkney says: "We were concerned that our incident rate was rising and we decided that toolbox talks were the right approach."

In 2010/11, 50 mainly low-speed and reversing incidents had been reported costing more than £25,000 in excess insurance payments alone. In 2011/12 the number of incidents increased to 75.

The films take into account Babcock's own safe driving policy, Drive