



Ken Rayner:

Motor vehicle collisions are one of the leading causes of workplace injuries in Ontario. And yet, occupational health and safety often takes a backseat, pun intended, when it comes to workplace hazard and risk assessments. But what if I told you that a well-planned road safety program could not only save lives, but also boost efficiency and protect your bottom line? So buckle up because today on the *IHSA Safety Podcast*, we're diving into the essential components of a road safety program that could make all the difference to your workplace.

Announcer:

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Ken Rayner:

Welcome to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*. I'm your host, Ken Rayner. On today's episode, we're joined by IHSA's Michelle Roberts, a transportation health and safety specialist, to break down exactly how employers can build an effective road safety program. Welcome back to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*, Michelle.

Michelle Roberts:

Thanks for having me, Ken. Glad to be back.

Ken Rayner:

Always love having you here. All right. So, Michelle, from identifying hidden driving hazards to crafting smart policies, training your team, and keeping your vehicles road ready, this episode is packed with practical advice from you that our listeners are not going to want to miss. So let's buckle up because we're diving into the essential steps that could make all the difference for your workforce. Michelle, are you ready?

Michelle Roberts:

I'm ready. Let's get going.

Ken Rayner:

All right. Start those engines. Let's go. Here we go.

Okay, Michelle, let's start with the why of this, because I think this is one of the most important aspects of this. Why should employers invest time and effort in building a road safety program?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, it's a very good question and the key motivator as to why should we take action? Well, unfortunately in Ontario, the statistics have been pretty consistent for over more than a decade that motor vehicle incidents (MVIs), and you'll probably hear me refer to them as MVIs throughout our conversation, but they are the leading cause of workplace fatalities and a significant large portion of the critical injuries that workers are exposed to are a result of an MVI. And we know that every day there's tens of thousands of Ontario workers that drive as part of their job. And I think we're going to talk a little bit more about...some we know are professional drivers and they operate large commercial vehicles. But also we have a large portion of the workforce that is non-commercial vehicle and they are driving maybe in their own vehicle from one location to another, commonly like a construction site or maybe clients visiting houses or driving back and forth to your head office. But in all cases, those workers are driving and we've identified it as a very hazardous and dangerous part of their day.

And so the "why" is that stats tell us that it's risky and hazardous, but also when it comes to managing that, employers have a legal duty. They have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of their employees, and that includes while they're driving. So that's an important obligation and it's the same obligation whether that employee is driving a personal vehicle or a company vehicle or a fleet commercial vehicle. So when we know that there's that legal obligation, the stats are reflecting that this is a high-risk activity, a well-structured road safety program can help manage those hazards and help focus the employer and the workplace parties on controls to protect them. And as you said, this can help them not only protect their greatest asset, which is their employees, but help them operate efficiently, reduce costs, reduce the likelihood of vehicle damage. We know that that incurs higher insurance claims and you could also have compliance issues with regulatory if you're not managing the road safety hazards.

And so, as we go on this journey together, as you said, buckle up, it's going to be a fun ride. I do want to emphasize what we're going to be talking about is we do have a ton of resources that are available. So when I talk about tips or things or actions or steps, please know that we can guide you in that process along the way with a whole whack of tip sheets, templates, customizable tools, et cetera. And I'm happy to discuss some of those as we carry on.

Ken Rayner:

Awesome. And Michelle, in some podcasts with where we've talked about joint health and safety committees and we've talked about health and safety representatives, we've talked about the differences in the similarities between a provincially regulated employer and a federally regulated employer. But when we're talking about a road safety program and what we're going to discuss today, really there's no difference in between the two in terms of applying a program. Would that be fair?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, that's totally accurate. Regardless of whose oversight, provincial or federal, what we're sharing and this process is applicable to anybody who's driving and has drivers for work.

Ken Rayner:

Perfect. All right. And I think the process we're hoping to discuss today is somewhat similar to the Plan-Do-Check-Act model, and that's something that we've discussed on other podcasts really in conjunction with an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS) like Certificate of Recognition or COR®. So this is something very, very similar. So when we're thinking about, I guess a road safety program, we want to think about the whole program coming full circle, the plan phase, the do phase, the check phase, and the act phase, which are all components and all important to be operating together in unison, correct?

Michelle Roberts:

Yes, correct. Absolutely.

Ken Rayner:

All right, so how does the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle really apply then to a road safety program?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and I think what you had explain there is that it provides a straightforward approach that kind of a step in a sequence of allowing employers and workplace parties to focus on what do I need to do? And of course, the objective of the road safety plan is to prevent workplace-related or work-related motor vehicle incidents. And so if you use that methodology, that framework, the Plan-Do-Check-Act and the Act, it allows you to go through that in a succinct process. So I'm just going to break down a little bit high level, what are those phases and how it relates to building a road safety program.

So in the plan phase, this is where we want to get commitment from management, set the goals, establish what are going to be our priority actions, who's going to do the work, so assigning responsibility, and then obviously deciding how are we going to measure success, how are we going to measure performance? That all happens in the plan phase.

And then in the do phase, this is when you're applying the understanding of what those driver-related hazards are, and then considering what controls do we need to put in place to address them. So the controls and measures, what's going to be the most effective to be able to reduce the exposures to the hazards. This is where you spend the time doing or developing the controls and implementing the controls, whether that's training and communication and other ways of implementing those.

And then the check phase is finding out, what we've done, is it working and is it leading us in the direction that we want to go? Are we seeing improvements? Are we seeing those protections for our workers? And so in that check phase, you're also analyzing, have the conditions changed? Has something new come in? Do we need to adjust it? And then the act is based on what you found after implementing and monitoring it, what do we need to adjust? So is it achieving it and acting on the need for either enhancements, revisions, maybe retraining? Do we need to refine something like a policy or a procedure? And then applying that so that you're getting that continuous cycle of improvement. Plan, do, check, act. Plan, do, check, act. It goes through that cycle and that allows us to really focus our efforts and ensure that that effectiveness is in place.

Ken Rayner:

Excellent. So this is very, very similar, Michelle to the other ways that we have on other podcasts talked about implementing this model. And so I appreciate that in other discussions we've had in regards to whether we're talking about our Ask a Construction Health and Safety Expert with Deb and Dave, or we've talked about different aspects of this, whether it's been other podcasts. In those aspects, we always start with the hazard identification and the risk first. Is that the same in a road safety program?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, absolutely. Identifying the hazards, addressing the risk, it's a foundation I think for any effective program, and it definitely applies to road safety. You need to really understand what are the potential dangers or the hazards, what's the risk, so the likelihood that that might result in an incident, and then be able to target your solutions appropriately. So this allows you to be a little bit proactive as well. Think ahead and take that information and go "what could happen or what is likely to happen, ideally doing that before an incident occurs. So it's a major foundational step.

Ken Rayner:

And you know what Michelle, I'm almost remiss to, I wish I had asked this or started off the podcast with this, which is that this podcast is not intended only for the transportation industry, right?

Michelle Roberts:

Correct.

Ken Rayner:

So, these driving related hazards, it's possible, are not the focus of our construction employers and our aggregate employers and our electric utility. It might be, for them, some of those more prominent hazards that we certainly discuss on a regular basis, falls from heights, struck-bys, electrical hazards, working around equipment and tools and the likes. Now we're talking about motor vehicle incidents. And it's so interesting too because at the start of when you started off you confirmed that this is the leading cause of fatalities for workers in Ontario, and yet we don't focus enough on this.

So is there an opportunity for construction, electrical utilities, and aggregate employers to reduce their risk by implementing a road safety program?

Michelle Roberts:

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. As you noted, driving, because it's such a common practice for all of us, it is often overlooked to help consider or to be able to assess the hazards and the risks. But if we focus on preventing those, as you said, we could do a really good job of protecting our workforce, reducing the likelihood of workplace fatalities and reducing our operating costs, et cetera. So it is pretty common that if you're talking about a construction firm, they might be focusing on the hazard of working at heights. So we do need to start there thinking that this is another hazard that we could apply the same kind of methodology to, but it's strictly related to driving and the road safety aspects of it.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. All right. So, for a construction, electric utility, or an aggregate firm, what would some of their driving related hazards be that they need to be aware of and start incorporating into their system?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, good question. And very high level some common ones that I think everyone can nod their head and relate to would be fatigue. Am I tired? Did I not sleep well? Maybe I'm working double shifts, how that might impair my ability to drive. We've talked on previous podcast episodes of the hazards of distracted driving. So that is a common hazard that occurs whether it's technology, your phone, et cetera, that's a big hazard. Weather condition, so I know right now we've just had some severe weather happen and it changes very, very quickly. Well, that's a hazard. Something we need to be able to address and be prepared for. Vehicle maintenance, so if you're supplying a vehicle or your staff member is using their own personal vehicle, hazards come with poor vehicle maintenance, if there's defects, not properly being maintained. And then of course, one of our favorite factors that we always experience is high traffic volumes or delays because of roadwork or construction or activity.

So those are all very common hazards that all of those sectors, transportation, electrical utilities, construction, and aggregates, when they're driving are going to be exposed to it. And then when you think of it, some of those operations in those industries do have specific driving-related tasks that could create additional hazards. So whether they're on a jobsite and it's poor terrain, uneven surfaces, commonly they work alongside live traffic. And so then they've got roads and equipment actually on, sorry, road equipment on the side of the road creating additional hazards, like sharing the road with the public. And then obviously what are they carrying? What are they moving? So either the vehicle configuration or even the load. All those are common things that are hazards that we need to consider and what might be the likelihood of something happening.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. So let's dive into using an example of a construction firm who has gone through the process of conducting a hazard assessment for all of their issues in regards to working at heights. So when they put a worker up on heights, they've done a hazard assessment first to ensure that they've got the proper controls. Would it be the same process for assessing the risks of driving hazards for a construction company, Michelle?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, definitely. I mean using the principle of what is the hazard, what's the potential or the consequences, and what then controls can we put in place to protect the worker? So it's the same principles, we're just now using a different lens.

When we talk about this, if you're scratching your head and you're like, okay, well I'm not sure really where to start when it comes to thinking of the potential hazards related to driving, we do have assessment tools that you can use, you can customize them, you can download them, and it walks you through that process of the key elements of what I should be looking for. For example, let's start with, well, who is driving for work? And that's the occurrences of who's driving as part of their function or who's just commuting to work, for example. You want to recognize unique driving hazards or the

conditions that come with driving. So whether that's long hours, are they driving at nighttime? Are they driving in adverse weather? Is it somewhere new that they've never been before?

And then you want to look at evaluating the risks. So what is the likelihood of something happening and considering contributing factors. So the driver themselves, what's their age, what's their experience, what is their driving history? A quick thing to check on their driver's abstract, do they have any violations? Because if someone has a speeding violation or not wearing their seatbelt, those are kind of risky behaviors that you want to flag and might obviously impact their performance when they're operating the vehicle. And then the journey risks, so where are they going? What's the nature of the trip? Will they incur traffic, high volume intersections that are roundabouts, maybe they're not sure of how to use those? Maybe they're under time pressures, we hear that a lot about time sensitivity. So you have to factor that in. And then what are they using? So the vehicle itself. So are they maintained? Are they equipped? Are they serviced? Are they intended for the proper use, is it designed for what the driving application that you want?

So in the tools that we have, we break it down into those three categories: the driving risk factors, the journey risk factors, and the vehicle risk factors. And I expanded on those and it's a checklist. It prompts you to ask the question and then you can analyze it with, yes, no, this is a hazard and then also quantify it with maybe the percentage of the time that it might be a factor. So those are three main kinds of categories that I would say to simplify it, help you focus on the factors to evaluate.

Ken Rayner:

Excellent. Michelle and, again, in other podcasts or some of the live broadcasts we've done, when we've talked about a hazard assessment one of the important components seems to be not having the employer have the belief that that task falls solely on them and they can't involve anybody else. In fact, that's a detriment if you're doing it by yourself and you're not using others. So I would imagine that it's very similar in this process.

So who could an employer include in the process to ensure they've identified all the relevant driving hazards faced by their workers and getting some of those different perspectives in to make sure you've really cast the net as wide as possible and ensured you've covered everything?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. For sure. The collaboration approach is key here and the success of it. So employers should involve everyone, including drivers, supervisors, if you have a health and safety rep or a joint health and safety committee, maybe you have individuals whose role is directly related to managing the fleet or dispatchers. Because they all have that well-rounded perspective and they may be able to give you that additional information that, oh, right, I didn't think that that would be something you'd be exposed to or based on your experience, you're right, that is a potential hazard we need to manage. So getting everybody involved is a key to success for sure.

Ken Rayner:

So that kind of covers off, I mean not extensively, but at a high level that covers off the plan phase of the Plan-Do-Check-Act. So let's move into the next one. Let's move into the do phase. And I think part of

that is now you've identified your hazards and you understand your risk, you've got to put controls in place. And one of the ways of doing that is obviously through policy development.

I guess, Michelle, really just hammering this home. Why is policy development the next step after the plan and the hazard identification in this process of this Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, because policies provide guidelines, clear expectations, they set the rules that we need to follow, and it also explains how we're going to manage those identified hazards. So a strong policy framework ensures consistency not only in compliance enforcement, but training and levelling the playing field. What is everybody expected to do? So that's a real important element of why we start with policy development, it sets the tone.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. And this next question I'm going to ask is a little bit of a pain point for me. So I understand that, hey, I'm a member of IHSA's management. I have at times assigned to me the responsibility of developing policies. And I will say it's not my favourite task. But I also know it's really important to get down on paper what it is your expectations are and how you expect work to be conducted, because that's the way we have today to make it consistent across the board and for everybody to be in the same playbook, using that terminology. So what recommendations do you have for an employer that is maybe like me going, oh geez, I just don't want to have to sit down and write policies to begin the process of developing driving-related policies?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, so good point, because we often hear that many of who we serve are small businesses, and they don't know where to start. And so the good news is we can help you, and we don't want you to reinvent the wheel necessarily, we want to support you in developing those policies. So you don't have to start from scratch. We have existing ones that you can utilize. Of course, they need to be customized to reflect your unique circumstances, not only for your workplace, but your vehicles, your drivers, et cetera. But we have templates that are a great foundation for you to start with.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. And so what IHSA resources specifically, could they leverage? Because I don't want to have the burden of creating the policies because on my own, I know what that feels like and I've asked others to help out and it's made the task easier. So what could you recommend for creating these policies and these employers and what resources can they turn to?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. So if you were to visit ihsa.ca Road Safety Solutions topic page, you will access a lot of templates that can be customized. So specifically to help with policy development, we do have templates already drafted on policy for the safe use of your own vehicle for work-related tasks. We also have a policy if you're using a company vehicle for work-related tasks and driving. We have a policy template for

distracted driving. And there's two options there. Perhaps you're saying, okay, well hands-free is an option, we have a policy template for that. Or you might be saying, zero cell phone usage, for example, is allowed zero tolerance, therefore we have a separate policy. And they give you the base, the foundations, the who, what, where, and the why. And then you need to obviously customize those and make sure that it's going to resonate with your workplace.

And then another part where people go, policy, but what else do I need, is a procedure. So the procedure is also a step-by-step guide of how are we going to meet that policy? And so in the same section on road safety solutions, we also do have templates for developing procedures. Not only tips on how to create one if you wanted to start from scratch, but we have some sample ones for you to customize, including a check-in procedure. So this is a pretty common hazard that you need to consider that often when people are driving for work, they're driving alone, how are you managing that? The template talks about when do they need to check in based on the circumstances, but how. How are they creating a travel plan or a journey plan? And then importantly, what would be the process if there's a missed check-in? So that's an example of a template that already exists.

And then another one is when you talk about policies and the procedures is what are some of the safe driving rules you want to set as expectations for your drivers? So there's a template there, it's very detailed, talks about the need to be prepared for the trip, doing a self-assessment. Am I fit for work and driving? Is my vehicle in good shape? And also it expands into things like common driving behaviors or practices that you're expecting. So speeding, zero tolerance, obviously drugs and alcohol, those types of limitations. But also what you're expecting is safe driving behaviors.

And a common one, and you and I can share this one that we have at IHSA that people will probably nod their heads at is even when it comes to parking, we have a safe driving rule when it comes to parking, is that we want individuals to be able to drive out of the spot. So you can either, one, as preferred as drive through into the parking space. If that's not an option, then to reverse into the parking space, giving you that opportunity to safely drive forward out of the space when you go to exit. So that's a rule, right? You and I, we do that. When you go to Voyager office we see our staff who are parked in that fashion and that's an example of what's in those templates. It's written in a fashion to allow you to set the stage of what would be expected.

Ken Rayner:

Michelle, that has become such a habit for me that if, and I can't remember the last time I did, but if there was any reason that I had to front into a parking spot, not with the intention of pulling through, boy, it would feel strange to me. I would feel really out of my element doing that, right?

Michelle Roberts:

Yes.

Ken Rayner:

Backing in just seems so normal now, and it just seems, yeah, it seems like such a good deal. And you know what, Michelle, all those resources that you just mentioned, just remind our membership and

those people that are listening when they break out their credit card, how often do you need to use it on the Road Safety Solutions page?

Michelle Roberts:

You don't.

Ken Rayner:

What? What do you mean? All those solutions we're providing for free and they're made in Canada, what?

Michelle Roberts:

Yes. Yes.

Ken Rayner:

Oh man.

Michelle Roberts:

Yep. They're available free to download, access right away, they're posted on the webpage with no restrictions, no cost.

Ken Rayner:

Okay. So in the way that our website's configured right now if you go to ihsa.ca, scroll down just a tad and look over at the right-hand side, just below the large image you're going to see a box that says Road Safety Solutions, click on that and it'll take you to all the resources that Michelle just mentioned. And if that, you just can't find it, just go to our search box and type in road safety solutions and it'll take you right there.

So Michelle, thank you so much for covering off the plan and the do, we're going to leave the check and the act for part two of this podcast. And thank you to the listeners for listening to part one of our series on preventing motor vehicle incidents through a road safety program. Be sure to subscribe and "like" us on your podcast channel and visit us at IHSA.ca for a wealth of health and safety resources and information,

Announcer

The *IHSA Safety Podcast*. For more episodes, tips and all things safety, go to ihsasafetypodcast.ca. Thanks for listening.