Belt Yourself for Safety

WHAT'S AT STAKE

You've heard it before and you'll hear it again because it's a fact – seatbelts save lives. A high percentage of all work-related fatalities each year are caused by motor vehicle crashes. Many of these deaths could have been avoided if the drivers and passengers in these vehicles had been belted in.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Industries with the largest number of traffic deaths are transportation, public utilities, trucking and government service. But any company which has employees driving on business can experience these tragedies. The key to prevention is employee awareness and following of the rules.

EXAMPLE

Here's a true story of a worker who learned the value of wearing his seatbelt:

This worker was delivering packages in a city late at night and decided to use the freeway. Just as he pulled onto the freeway to head out of town, he noticed headlights coming directly at him. He attempted to avoid the oncoming car, but failed as it hit his car head-on. The other car's unbelted driver was thrown through both windshields and died in the belted worker's back seat. The belted worker only suffered bruises where the seatbelt had tightened across his chest.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Consider these safety points when you are driving or riding in a company vehicle:

- Have you been properly trained to drive the particular vehicle? If not, talk to your supervisor. You must have the required training before you get behind the wheel of any vehicle, whether it be the company truck or the company forklift.
- Are you provided with periodic refresher training? Ask for

more training if you are uncertain about anything regarding your vehicle.

- Is there an enforced seatbelt policy in addition to seatbelt laws? Get in the habit of wearing seatbelts on or off the job. Before you know it, you will be strapping on your seatbelt without even thinking about it.
- Is there an enforced speed control program? If you are not sure, ask.
- Is there a ban on cellphone use while driving?
- Are weather and traffic warnings given before you set out on a job?
- Are hours of operation and dispatching times reasonable? If you think they are not, it’s up to you to bring your concerns forward.

FINAL WORD

Finally, do you understand and care about the reasons for wearing seatbelts? Seatbelts are in your vehicle for a reason – to protect you. Putting on your seatbelt takes a second of your time. That second could very well save your life.