

driving for work risk management case study - Bord Gáis Networks



Introduction

Bord Gáis Networks recognises that driving for work presents one of the single greatest workplace risks to its staff and has commenced a programme of work to address this risk.

Driving for Work Profile

Bord Gáis Networks owns and operates a fleet of approximately 75 vehicles, the vast majority of which are Ford Transit-type commercial vehicles with van bodies. The vehicles are driven by technical personnel who carry out maintenance work on natural gas installations and meters in domestic and commercial properties. Vehicles are also used to respond to emergency calls (Bord Gáis Networks and its contractors respond to around 20,000 emergency calls every year with an average response time of 27 minutes – this is done without blue lights or sirens). The Bord Gáis Networks fleet travels approximately 1.5M kilometres annually.

A further 350 staff drive “grey fleet” vehicles (i.e. employees’ private vehicles for which business mileage expenses are claimed), travelling anywhere from a handful of kilometres every year to over 20,000 kilometres per year, depending on the individual’s role and responsibilities.

Driving for Work Policy

Key to the driving for work programme is a Driving for Work policy, signed by the Bord Gáis CEO. This policy, which is aligned with the corporate safety policy, recognises the risks associated with driving and commits to reduce and maintain those risks at acceptable levels. The policy acknowledges the vehicle, driver and journey as key factors associated with driving for work risks and commits to specific actions to address these.

Branding

To assist with the roll out, recognition and acceptance of driving for work initiatives, Bord Gáis Networks developed a brand identity and logo for the programme - “Drive Safe”. The logo is used to brand all of its driving for work material.

Training

A core element of the Drive Safe programme is the provision of driving training for all Bord Gáis Networks drivers, both fleet and

grey-fleet drivers. The type of training provided depends on the work-related mileage driven and the risk level associated with that driving duty.

■ E-Learning

Drivers driving up to 1,500 work-related miles per year will undertake an online e-learning programme. The programme takes approximately 90 minutes to complete in a series of six modules with a short test at the end of each module to validate learning. The training covers basic legal requirements, vehicle and journey preparation, advanced driving skills and the actions to take in the event of a breakdown or collision.

■ Classroom Training

All fleet drivers and grey-fleet drivers driving between 1,500 and 12,000 work-related miles per year have received classroom training, delivered by an instructor in a traditional training environment. The content of the classroom training is similar to the e-learning programme, but its delivery by an instructor allows for more interaction and, critically, facilitates field staff who do not have routine access to a computer. This training is provided by an external provider under contract. To date, nearly 220 drivers have attended classroom driver training.

■ Practical Training

Any (fleet or grey-fleet) driver driving in excess of 12,000 work-related miles per year, or who is considered to undertake driving duties with an elevated risk level is required, in addition to the classroom training, to undertake in-vehicle training with an instructor on a one-to-one basis where the skills taught in the classroom session are put into practice. Elevated risk driving duties include, for example, frequent driving at night, regular driving on country roads, emergency response driving. Drivers receive a certificate and risk-based feedback on their performance behind the wheel.

To date, over 100 drivers have completed practical, in-vehicle training. Feedback from drivers who have participated in the training has been overwhelmingly positive with some drivers even asking where they could access similar training for family members!

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■ Trailer Towing Training

A small number of Bord Gáis Networks fleet drivers tow trailers as part of their work-related driving duties. Any driver towing a trailer for work is provided with specific classroom and in-vehicle practical training on safe trailer towing.

■ 4 x 4 Training

A small number of Bord Gáis Networks engineering staff assigned to cross-country pipeline construction projects are required to drive four-wheel-drive vehicles in an off-road environment along the pipeline route. These drivers receive specialist classroom and in-vehicle practical training at a 4x4 driving training venue.

Audit and Benchmarking

Bord Gáis Networks commissioned a specialist driving-for-work safety consultancy to carry out a gap analysis and benchmarking study of its driving for work arrangements. The report compared current arrangements with those in place in other businesses and highlighted areas for improvement. Bord Gáis Networks is using the results from this audit to plan its Drive Safe programme initiatives.

Driving Safety Working Group

To maximise the effectiveness of the Drive Safe programme, Bord Gáis Networks has established a consultative driving safety working group comprising driver, trade union and safety representatives and personnel from the Safety, Fleet, Human Resources and Insurance teams. The group meets quarterly with the remit to "review, agree and monitor driving safety initiatives in Bord Gáis Networks".

Driver Survey

To help prioritise driving safety initiatives, Bord Gáis Networks has commenced a risk-based survey of all of its staff who drive for work. The online survey, managed by an external provider, asks a range of questions designed to establish a risk profile for each driver. The results of the survey will help to quantify and prioritise the driving safety initiatives required in the business, whilst identifying which drivers require additional support to reduce their risk levels. Bord Gáis Networks is currently undertaking this survey on a pilot basis with 50 drivers and expects to roll this out to all fleet and grey fleet drivers in due course.

Other Activities

■ Driver Handbook

A driver handbook is nearing completion. The information contains useful information and advice and will support the e-learning, classroom and practical training provided to drivers.

■ Promotion

As part of a dedicated internal Health, Safety and Environment day, Bord Gáis Networks launched the Drive Safe brand by giving each member of staff a branded high visibility vest, with instructions to keep the vest in the glove compartment or door pocket of their vehicle so that they can put it on before getting out of the vehicle in the event of a breakdown or collision. Personnel who do not drive can use the vest for cycling or walking or can give it to a friend or relative.

■ Vehicle Improvements

Bord Gáis Networks is continuously improving the safety and efficiency of its fleet. As vehicles are replaced, new technology and equipment are introduced to help improve driver and other road users' safety and comfort. Recent improvements include the addition of high visibility chevrons on the back of many fleet vehicles, high-intensity LED flashing lights front and rear (instead of roof mounted flashing beacons), reversing cameras on the large and medium sized vehicles, hot water systems (for handwashing), non-slip flooring, grab handles, rear bumper steps, side steps on larger vehicles, internal LED lighting, ratchet restraint straps and heated mirrors and windscreens. The average cost of such features is around €5k per vehicle.

■ Winter Tyres

For the last two years Bord Gáis Networks has installed winter/ all-season tyres on the majority of its fleet. The decision followed the cold winters experienced in 2010/11 and the difficulties experienced by the drivers responding to emergency calls during these periods. Following consultation with other gas network operators around Europe, BGN researched winter tyres and conducted a number of trials, comparing the performance of fleet vehicles fitted with regular tyres against identical vehicles fitted with winter tyres. Driver representatives participated in the trials and, convinced of the benefits of winter/ all-season tyres in regular Irish winter conditions (cold and wet!), not just in snow and ice, endorsed the decision to fit these tyres to fleet vehicles.

