

## A Company Vehicle Crash Could Impact Everyone

A devastating company vehicle crash can leave a lasting impact at your business in more ways than you may realize. Businesses may need to consider the negative repercussions stemming from “social inflation,” or, negative public sentiment and mistrust towards businesses among jury members. They may also need to contend with “nuclear verdicts;” an award that is significantly higher than would be expected given the facts of the case.

In litigation, jurors are sending a clear message that businesses can be held accountable for the actions of their employee drivers; but have you considered the long-term effects that the crash itself could have on your employees — or your business?

**Employee Impact.** As your most valuable asset, your employees need to understand the real dangers of operating company vehicles in order to avoid potential life-altering, or life-ending crashes.

A crash could be a traumatic experience, not only for the driver or passengers, but for their fellow employees. Knowing that one of your employees may have sustained severe injuries, or perhaps did not survive, could have a lasting impact on everyone at your business. Any injuries or long-term disabilities sustained might lead to costly workers compensation claims and settlements. On top of that, your employee may be out of work for an extended period of time.

**Business Impact.** With the costs of nuclear verdicts continuing to rise, your business may be on the line as well. For example, if a jury awards a claimant a nuclear verdict, insurance may only cover a portion of that payment. The rest of the cost could go to you as the business owner, which may lead to bankruptcy if you cannot pay — and the loss of your business and your employees’ jobs. The harsh realities of these crashes occur all too often. Using proper training and creating a strong company driving policy could help avoid crashes and help to keep your employees — and your business — safe.

**Create a Strong Driving Policy.** A strong policy could:

- Prohibit company drivers from using mobile devices and other distractions behind the wheel
- Where appropriate, incorporate driver standards and screening for company drivers
- Outline expectations for safe vehicle usage
- Clarify consequences for failure to follow the company policy
- Go beyond the minimum local, state, and federal laws applicable to your business

**Communicate, Demonstrate, and Enforce Your Policy.** Every employee should be trained, and regularly retrained, on your driving policy. Be sure to keep records of any trainings that are completed by employees. Lead by example, and present information in a fresh and memorable way to increase retention. Follow through on the consequences of consistently failing to comply with your company driving policy.

Knowing that all employees have access to life-saving knowledge can benefit their health and safety, and your company’s bottom line. A strong commitment to workplace safety, and a solid driving policy, could help prevent vehicle crashes from occurring in the first place. Evaluate your company policies, look for opportunities to reduce distractions, reinforce your safety culture, and help make the roads a safer place for everyone.

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