



Centre for Accident Research  
& Road Safety - Queensland  
(CARRS-Q)

# State of the Road

A fact sheet of the Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland



**Australian research reveals that road crashes are the most common cause of work-related fatalities, injuries and absences from work.<sup>1</sup>**

**Traffic injuries are twice as likely to result in death or permanent disability than other workplace incidents.<sup>6</sup>**

**Work-related road crashes cost the Australian community approximately \$1.5 billion annually.<sup>6</sup>**

## THE FACTS

- Work-related road crashes account for almost half of all occupational fatalities in Australia (NOHSC, 1999) and 13% of the national road toll.<sup>5</sup>
- The Australian Safety and Compensation Council conducted a study on work-related road crash fatalities during 2004-5.<sup>1</sup> During this one year period, of the total 347 work-related deaths (including commuting fatalities), there were 84 (24%) persons killed in road crashes while they were working and an additional 91 (26%) were killed while travelling to or from work. The number of reported deaths is known to be understated in this report due to the difficulty in accurately cross-matching data sets and identification of all commuting deaths by some states.
- Work-related road crashes incur a greater average time lost in worker absence than any other workplace claim.<sup>2</sup>
- A work-related driving survey found that company drivers travelled more than twice the annual distance private car drivers travelled. Furthermore, it was suggested that after differences in demographic and exposure variables had been considered, company car

drivers had about 50% more incidents than private drivers.<sup>3</sup>

- Based on Australian workers compensation data, work-related road crash injuries are estimated to cost approximately \$500 million per year.<sup>5-6</sup> CARRS-Q research has shown that costs associated with work-related vehicle crashes have more often than not been calculated in terms of vehicle damage or write off costs. These costs however are only the tip of the iceberg. Other costs not usually identified include personal injury, medical/hospital, rehabilitation, absence from work, workers compensation, downtime/loss productivity and potential loss of custom<sup>5</sup>, administration, loss of assets, retraining and insurance premiums<sup>7</sup>. CARRS-Q has undertaken research to identify the true cost of a fleet crash. Results indicated, within a particular fleet, that the average total insurance cost inclusive of property damage, workers compensation and third party costs was \$28,122 per incident.<sup>8</sup> Actual vehicle crash costs could be somewhere between 8-36 times vehicle repair/replacement costs<sup>5</sup>.

## Legislation

- Within Australia, there is not exact uniformity of legislation in relation to work-related road safety, however the focus is essentially the same. There are two key elements of legislation. Firstly, there is road safety or transport legislation that governs general road use including driving hours for heavy vehicles as well as vehicle safety and driver qualification and regulatory frameworks. Secondly, organisations that operate vehicles for work are also governed by Workplace Health and Safety legislation.<sup>7</sup>
- Under Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) legislation in Australia, vehicles used for work purposes are considered as a workplace when the vehicle is supplied by an employer for use by a worker in the performance of work. Therefore, employers have an obligation (or duty of care) to provide a safe place and a safe system of work. Likewise, employees have an obligation to perform work (including driving) safely and comply with the instructions given for workplace health and safety at the workplace by the employer.



organisational culture, and budgetary constraints. For more information, please contact us.

### CARRS-Q'S WORK IN THIS AREA

- *Work-related road safety research*  
CARRS-Q is involved in a number of research projects which aim to advance the field of work-related road safety.
- *Customised research and advisory service*  
CARRS-Q offers a “one stop shop” service for the fleet safety requirements of local and national organisations ranging in fleet size from 5 to 18,000 vehicles. Our services include fleet safety policy development, crash recording and reporting processes, seminars and educational workshops, driver profiling, fleet bench-marking to evaluate current and future practices, and the development of tailored interventions and evaluations.
- *Road safety awareness program*  
Designed to be easily implemented by a company to reach as many staff as possible to encourage safe driving, the program includes road safety posters, fleet safety fact sheets, work-related road safety hints or tips, computer screen messages and Tool Box Talks covering a range of work-related driving topics.
- *Fleet safety seminars*  
In addition to offering individually tailored presentations to organisations, CARRS-Q runs a Fleet Safety Seminar Series with guest presentations by recognised national and international fleet safety experts.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- An improved policy and monitoring focus is required to ensure organisations discharge their Workplace Health and Safety obligations by managing the risk associated with driving for work. Given that work-related road safety compensation claims make up almost half of all workers compensation claims, organisations need to manage this risk with at least the level of attention and resources that they allocate to other workplace risks.
- A policy shift within fleet organisations is required to encourage the proactive rather than reactive management of work-related road safety risk.
- The use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) to increase work-related road safety.

### Why improve work-related road safety?

- In recent years, changes in industry/employer accountability, business processes, OH&S, Chain of Responsibility, Workers Compensation legislation, insurance and third party coverage, and a generally more litigious environment require industry to develop better bench-marking and more comprehensive programs to improve fleet safety.<sup>9</sup>
- Work-related road safety improvements equate to:
  - improved safety for drivers, other workers, road users, and members of the public
  - improved productivity
  - increased legislation compliance
  - reduction in fatalities and injuries
  - reduction in work absences
  - reduction in crash-related costs

### Influences on work-related road safety

How an organisation performs, or is required to perform its operations, may influence work-related driver safety (eg. high mileage travel<sup>10-11</sup>, time pressures<sup>12</sup>, and in particular, organisational culture<sup>1</sup>). Other influences may include poor maintenance procedure, poor selection of vehicles for the job, selection and recruitment of drivers and lack of road safety policy and procedures. These factors may have a direct influence on a work-related road incident. For example, worn tyres that are overlooked due to a poor maintenance program may cause a crash, or time pressure to complete jobs may lead to speed-related crashes.

### Current inadequacies

- Many employers, although addressing risks associated with other areas of

business operation, fail to appropriately address the high risk associated with work-related driving. The development of research-based interventions is critical in improving occupational safety outcomes.

- According to the Australasian College of Road Safety, all organisations should have policies which cover the purchase and leasing arrangements of safe vehicles, safe driving and workplace practices and education in road safety.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, organisations need to take explicit action to ensure their employees know and practice safe vehicle use. This is not yet the case.

### TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE

#### For work-related drivers

- Knowledge of work-related vehicle/road safety enables drivers to identify potential risks to their own driving safety and change their driving behaviour accordingly.
- Be an alert, safe and courteous driver.
- Allow adequate time to avoid rushing.
- Be aware of traffic and environmental conditions and drive accordingly.
- Report any vehicle-related risks to your employer.
- On long journeys, take a break every two hours.

#### For organisations operating fleets

Work-related road safety improvements within any organisation can only be achieved through the continued commitment and support of both staff and management. CARRS-Q runs an extensive work-related road safety program tailoring services to meet the unique needs of individual organisations regarding their fleet size, vehicle composition,

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*The CARRS-Q vision is to decrease the local, national and international burden of trauma-related harm.*

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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CARRS-Q, *State of the Road: Work-related Road Safety Fact Sheet, 2008*

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