

The people perspective

Why every business needs a car policy.

Why bother with a car policy? Deciding who has a car is one element; but a policy also clarifies exactly what's expected of drivers too. It's also a legal responsibility of every business to ensure it's protecting the health and safety of employees: its 'duty of care'



When a third of all road accidents involve someone working, driving for business is an area every company needs to take notice of, and take steps to ensure the safety of its drivers and other road users.

'Duty of care' doesn't just apply to regular company car drivers, but also ad hoc drivers using a company vehicle or driving their own vehicle for business. Sending someone to the bank in the MD's car is still viewed as a business trip by law.

The company must check drivers are entitled to drive. Don't make do with a photocopied driving licence from staff members; use a proper licence checking service or ask the DVLA directly. If it is later discovered that an individual wasn't eligible to drive, taking a copy at face value won't be sufficient to absolve the company of its responsibility.

Having a car policy which all staff are familiar with and follow is a useful way of providing information, guidance and advice. Your car policy should be clear

on what is and isn't permitted. For example, a zero tolerance stance on alcohol or drugs use is highly recommended. You can also include advice on dealing with tiredness for example – a common cause of accidents.

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Your drivers have lots of responsibilities too. They should inform the business if illness, prescribed medication or anything else could affect their ability to drive safely. They should also let you know of convictions, disqualifications or points. They must familiarise themselves with how to operate a vehicle correctly before driving. Your policy can state that they must not allow others to drive the vehicle and you should also include driver responsibilities regarding cleaning, maintenance and not smoking inside, which can be illegal in a company vehicle.

Use of mobile phones is a vital point. In 2007, the government introduced new penalties for using a hand-held phone. But hands-free does not mean risk-free and any driver involved in an accident whilst using hands-free could face

the same penalties – the police may consider the use of any mobile phone a contributing factor.

Definitely include a clause regarding casual use within your policy so the driver is clear on if and how they can use the vehicle whilst off duty. Make clear that company cars cannot be used for any other business (for example an employee's spouse driving for his/her own business trips).

Putting a robust policy in place isn't difficult. For small businesses on a budget, reputable fleet and vehicle management providers like Lombard Vehicle Solutions are often happy to share standard policy examples which you can adapt to suit your business needs.

Finally, don't forget to minimise your business risk by reducing road usage altogether. Telephone and video conferencing facilities are now a sophisticated and viable alternative to face-to-face meetings. Consider other forms of transport such as rail or air too.

If you would like to find out more about what Lombard Vehicle Solutions could do for you, or would like to see our vehicle special offers, please click [here](#).

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