



UK HGV Driver Shortage

Introduction

The UK's logistics sector has been experiencing a significant shortage of heavy goods drivers for a number of years. The situation is now intensifying due to Covid 19, changes to tax laws concerning drivers pay and the effects of Brexit. These factors, coupled with the reopening of the hospitality and non-essential retail sectors, is further exacerbating the current situation across supply chains. The consideration of recruiting younger and/or inexperienced HGV drivers to fill the gaps is now becoming a reality for some logistics companies in the UK.

The Issues

The three main reasons that are contributing to the national shortage of qualified and experienced HGV drivers.

1. **HGV Driving Test Delays** – Due to the effects of Covid, approximately 12 months' worth of driver training and testing has been lost creating a backlog of HGV tests.
2. **IR35** - Is designed to assess whether a contractor is a genuine contractor rather than a 'disguised' employee, for the purposes of paying tax. Many contractors and agency drivers now have to pay up to an extra 25% tax forcing some to look for other occupations.
3. **Brexit** - Even before Covid 19 and IR35, the situation was critical with many EU HGV drivers returning home for Brexit-related reasons. Moreover, changes to the UK Government's immigration system mean employers should invest in the domestic workforce. As a result, driving is not listed as an essential skill on Visas causing immigration delays for EU HGV drivers returning to the UK for work.

The Risks

Protector understands the recruitment challenges faced by many of our clients and the wider logistics industry at this present time. In our opinion, the recruitment of young and/or inexperienced HGV drivers creates additional risk factors that require careful consideration. There is scope for a potential increase in serious road traffic collisions involving young and/or inexperienced drivers. Therefore it is critical that fleet operators develop and implement effective control measures to manage the risks.

In an attempt to ease the situation, until August 8th 2021, the UK Government has marginally relaxed existing drivers hours rules. This permits drivers to increase their daily driving limit from nine hours to 11 hours twice per week. This will allow HGV drivers to make longer journeys where necessary but must not compromise driver safety including driver tiredness and fatigue related risk exposures.

Next Steps

Whilst we accept that our clients have existing Health & Safety Management procedures in place, consider reviewing arrangements for young and/or inexperienced HGV drivers. We expect our clients to incorporate the following best practice controls into their risk management procedures.

Driver Safety Management

- All interviews and decisions made are made by a competent person and documented
- A specific young/inexperienced driver risk assessment is completed, documented and all action points implemented
- A formal young/inexperienced driver policy is developed and evaluated periodically
- A training needs analysis is undertaken specifically for young/inexperienced drivers
- Persons undertaking recruitment/observations are trained on the specific risks introduced by young/inexperienced drivers

The recruitment process must include:

- Clearly set out the safe driving expectations and commitment to safety
- Questions regarding the individuals driving and collision history (including personal vehicles)
- Driving competence assessment, including in-vehicle observation technique
- Highway code knowledge assessment
- Driver attitude and behaviour assessment
- Pre-employment health and eyesight checks
- Where necessary a driver Improvement plan is developed with regular follow up to ensure effectiveness

Driver Competence

In addition to written Risk Assessments, clients must ensure drivers are competent to perform the work they carry out. As an initial step, a training needs analysis should be undertaken. Drivers will need to be provided with full and documented training and a documented competency assessment undertaken to verify it is safe to continue with the proposed role. Ongoing regular refresher training will be necessary to maintain competence and periodic observations undertaken by line management to verify drivers remain competent at all times. The Induction training topics must include, as a minimum:

- Vulnerable road users & blind spots
- Highway Code
- Vehicle familiarisation including height, width, length awareness
- Avoiding bridge strikes
- Braking distances & Safe speeds
- Observation, anticipation and hazard awareness
- Defect reporting and recording
- Incident reporting and investigation process
- Loading & securing of loads
- Driver distraction and the safe use of in cab technology
- Drivers hours and fatigue management

Ongoing management must include:

- Probationary period for initial 6 months of employment
- Only nursery routes allocated for the first 3 months of probationary period
- Regular driver safety monitoring through telematics and/or cameras
- Regular driver/manager performance reviews
- Specific training programme developed targeting risk associated with young/inexperienced drivers
- All collisions and incidents are investigated with learnings followed up
- Collision data is analysed periodically to understand if controls are effective

Further information and guidance on this subject and road safety is available from:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-drivers-hours-relaxations>
- <https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/highway-code-road-safety>
- <https://www.think.gov.uk/>
- <https://www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com/>
- <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety>

For clarification or further information please contact:

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