

"PRAISE": Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees

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Fact Sheet
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ETSC interview with Fredsø Vognmandsforretning



ETSC's PRAISE project, "Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees" aims at mobilising knowledge needed to create work-related road safety leadership. The project aims to advance the awareness of the need for work-related road safety management and provide the know-how to employers who have to take on that challenge. It also aims to present the work-related road safety standards of road safety champions, by presenting employers' success stories, notably through the PRAISE Fact Sheets. This Fact Sheet follows from ETSC's PRAISE report 3 on "Fitness to Drive" published in May 2010.

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Fredsø Vognmandsforretning Introduktion

Haulage company Fredsø Vognmandsforretning, based on the island of Mors in Denmark's North Jutland region, has bought and installed alcolocks in all of its trucks: 25 in all.

ETSC has interviewed the cheerful and humorous Haulage contractor Benny Nielsen to get the inside story on Fredsø Vognmandsforretning's initiative, and understand how even a small haulage company can invest into road safety. Fredsø Vognmandsforretning's decision to install alcolocks also demonstrates that despite a good safety records there is no room for complacency and there is always room to introduce new safety measures to be on top of the game.

Benny Nielsen from North Jutland in Denmark doesn't mind taking the lead – especially when it serves a good cause. The background is rather gloomy: in Denmark every year approximately 10,000 drivers are found guilty of drink driving and 100 people die in accidents involving drink driving.

"We don't want to be part of those appalling statistics, and that's the signal we send through this initiative: alcohol and haulage don't mix" says Nielsen.

The attitude towards drink driving is clear: according to a new survey from Gallup, 73% of the Danish population want the installation of alcolocks to be mandatory and 89% feel that it should be a compulsory installation in commercial vehicles.

With alcolocks installed in vehicles it's the BAC-limit (Blood Alcohol Content) that decides whether the truck starts. The driver has to blow in a handheld unit with a built-in nozzle and wired to the dashboard. Every driver has his own private nozzle. If the driver's breath doesn't remain within the alcolock's BAC-limit the truck can't start. It's simple and effective.

Interview with Benny Nielsen

Road Safety management at Fredsø Vognmandsforretning

1. Can you provide any figures tracking your safety performance over the years?

In the company we have very fine accident statistics. You have to go back to 2005 to find the last registered accident. It concerned a truck in Sweden crashing because one of its front tires exploded causing it to drive out over a cliff. Nothing happened to the driver and later it was established to be bad tire quality that caused the accident. The Institute of Technology confirmed this and we didn't lose any bonus from the insurance company. In 2001 we had an inattentive driver that ran into a car that suddenly slammed the breaks because of a dog on the road. Also in this case there was only material damage - fortunately. We have approximately one accident every 10th year and we have never been involved in traffic accidents with a deadly outcome.

2. How are the transport safety decisions at Fredsø Vognmandsforretning taken?

In the company we have an open dialogue with our drivers concerning the implementation of new safety measures. We're happy that they get involved. We also select our drivers very carefully. We also keep an open dialogue with our insurance company but mostly because we want to lower our insurance premium due to our new safety measures.

3. What is the leading cause of road collisions or risk factor your company is exposed to on the roads?

The biggest risk factors on the road are the tractors and caravans. We have to overtake them on the road

because they drive slowly, but shifting lanes is dangerous. Wet and slippery roads are not a big problem for us as we make a point to regulate the speed according to the weather conditions as part of our journey planning, and we have no problem doing this.

4. How did you come to that conclusion?

Through a simple process of drivers reporting back to us.

5. Do you think that transport companies have a duty to go beyond the legislation regarding traffic safety of the country in which they operate?

In some situations you may go even further than the legal framework if you think it is a good idea. But as a minimum I think that everyone should anticipate the legislation. We decided to install alcolocks in all our trucks in great part because we want to be prepared to meet future requirements in this area. I believe that alcolocks will be required by law within a few years, and we are now ready to satisfy any such law.

I also believe that it's very important that you have the same legal requirements regarding safety all over Europe. This will make the competition fairer and improve accident statistics internationally.

6. What would you say are the main drivers/reasons for your company's efforts in road safety?

There are three main reasons for us: to prevent accidents to occur and improve our accident statistics, to save money, and to achieve a good image in the industry.

7. How do you recruit your drivers?

We don't seek them through advertising in the papers. They're usually recruited by recommendation from one of our drivers. It is often a friend from the driver's social circle. In this way we know that they're qualified for the job. They're experienced, dutiful and reliable. We're very satisfied with our drivers.

8. On what do you base your decisions for your vehicle purchase selection?

We drive a well-known brand of trucks with many good safety measures. We also have a good working collaboration with the local dealership of that brand. We also aim for a reasonably new fleet of trucks with all the new safety measures – ABS, EBS, Dynafleet (an online Transport Information System that allows to see in real time the current location of vehicles, their fuel consumption, messages, driver times, service intervals etc.) etc. We choose to install all the safety features that we possibly can.

Questions about alcohol and alcolocks



1. What are the main elements of your company's policy to prevent drink driving?

We have a clear alcohol policy. Alcohol on the workplace leads to immediate dismissal. We do not interfere with what the employees do at home but at the workplace alcohol is completely banned.

2. How is your company working with alcolocks?

We have alcolocks installed in all of our trucks, they are adjusted to a BAC limit of 0.2 (below Denmark's legal 0.5 limit) that people taking medicine (such as cough syrup for example) aren't prevented from starting the truck. We have observed some cases where a BAC limit of 0.0 resulted in problems for drivers taking cough syrup: their trucks did not start when they breathed in the alcolock. They had to drink water and wait a bit before the truck would start.

3. How do you prevent drivers from circumventing the alcolock?

We can observe on our fleet steering program Dynafleet if the alcolock has been switched off or short-circuited. In that case Dynafleet gives a signal to the workshop when the truck is at service.

4. When did you start and how many alcolocks are there now being used?

About three months ago we installed the alcolocks in all of our 25 trucks.

5. What motivated you to start?

We really wanted to send a signal to our customers that we take traffic safety seriously. It is imperative for us to let our customers know that their goods are in safe hands when we transport them. Customers view this as one more guarantee that their goods will be delivered safely. The installation has nothing to do with a previous alcohol problem in the company.

6. Who did you contact to help you introduce alcolocks in your fleet / how did you identify a supplier?

I had the idea of installing alcolocks in all our trucks during a conversation with the Service Manager of the brand of trucks we are using. He told me about the principle of this system. A decisive point is that alcolocks are quick and easy to operate which made me decide together with employees from the company to install alcolocks in all of the trucks.

7. What is the procedure if you identify a drunk driver?

If a driver shows up drunk at work he is dismissed. It is as simple as that.

8. How many cases of drink driving have you ever had?

We have had two drivers who drove with excess alcohol in the blood and they were both dismissed as soon as I found out. There's nothing to discuss and the cooperation ends immediately.

9. What has been the opinion of the drivers? Are they supportive?

The drivers have embraced the initiative with alcolocks in all the vehicles. Some were a bit sceptical at first but today they're pleased about it. There can never be any doubts concerning the driver's way of driving or acting. Alcohol can never be suspected of being the cause in case of an incident, this is reassuring for drivers.

10. What have been the lessons learnt and what would you advise to other companies considering going forward with this?

You have to inform the employees and make sure to get support to go through with it. It's also equally important to inform the customers. Up until now we only have positive things to say about alcolocks. They work, are easy to operate and have given our company a lot of good publicity in trade journals, local newspapers and magazines. Also it's a relatively little investment to install alcolocks.

11. Would you like to see further steps from the Danish authorities in the prevention of drink driving?

We would be happy with a more restrictive alcohol policy in Denmark in particular concerning young people driving cars who do not always have the necessary respect regarding drink driving. More campaigns and alcohol controls would be welcome too.

The Business Case

1. Have you calculated the financial benefits that have or will result from your

investments in road safety in terms of the avoidance of collisions and casualties?

We haven't made any exact calculations but we are certain that we are saving money having a high safety policy in which we save fuel, damages, days lost through illness etc.

2. Do you feel that your customers are reassured by knowing that you have strong safety standards? And how do you communicate that to your customers?

We know that our customers are happy and satisfied with our measures. It's not only the price they're concerned about but also the company's way of showing responsibility and being safety and quality minded. We inform about our initiatives by word of mouth but in the case of the installation of alcolocks we also released material to the press which created a lot of good publicity.

3. How do you feel that you perform compared to your competitors concerning road safety?

We stand strong in the competition and have a clear opinion regarding haste and speed. We don't want to be pressured into doing our job in a hasty manner because it can result in safety breaches. We want decent working conditions to ensure safety.

Other Areas

1. Are there other sources of collision/casualties that you try address?

It's important to drive within the speed limits especially in the cities. This is pointed out to our drivers as well as the banned use of mobile phones while driving. If a driver gets a speeding ticket they're told to pay it themselves and not to let it happen again. I know that our drivers keep within

the speed limits because they do not receive any speeding tickets, it's as simple as that!

2. Do you have a way of controlling your drivers' speed?

If we want to check if a driver has been speeding we can use Dynafleet and the driver's tachograph chart.

3. Do you have a way of ensuring your drivers wear their seat-belts?

When the safety belt isn't put on the system gives a warning signal. It reminds the driver to remember to put it on. It works very well.

4. Do you have a driver training scheme in place? How are your drivers trained?

We take all the mandatory courses and arrange driver evenings where we discuss trucks, driving technique, maintenance, etc. We also have our drivers attending different technical driving facilities to train them in different situations – such as driving on wet or slippery roads.

5. Do you explain to your drivers the importance of being fit to drive (healthy lifestyle, healthy diet, enough sleep, etc...)

We do not interfere in the driver's spare time but everyone knows that they have to be well rested and upbeat when the work day begins. That is the essence of our drivers. We have 0.01 percent days lost through sickness. We are very satisfied with this.

ETSC would like to thank Benny Nielsen for his precious contribution.

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