



## Case study – Centrica

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**Centrica is one of the leading UK and international energy providers. The company was formed in February 1997 after the demerger of British Gas plc and employs around 30,000 people. The group comprises the gas supply, services and retail businesses of British Gas, together with the gas production business of the North and South Morecambe gas fields.**

The Centrica Fleet Trainee Induction Programme is a road safety initiative for new apprentices who drive as part of their daily duties. The programme includes a one-to-one driving assessment with guidance provided by an approved driver trainer, and has been developed specifically with young workers in mind. The road safety charity BRAKE has been involved in developing the presentation material and in training the trainers. Centrica Fleet has 15 employees and contracts a number of external suppliers to provide vehicle-related services for Centrica staff. The road risk assessments are provided by external suppliers, with all presentations delivered by Centrica fleet services employees. Centrica's road safety policy requires that all company employees who drive as part of their work receive driver training and development. The programme fully implements the requirements of the road risk policy.

### **Background**

The Centrica Fleet Trainee Induction Programme was developed specifically for young workers. The one-to-one assessment is essential for young trainees, as they may have only recently passed their driving test and may have little driving experience. In addition, British Gas vans have restricted

visibility, as the rear doors and rear side panels are solid. Drivers must rely on their wing mirrors and be aware of blind spots. Before the development of the full-day programme, a one-hour induction was provided which focused on the vehicle but did not provide any road safety information. The new programme, however, not only looks at the behaviour of the trainees during the in-vehicle assessment, but also assesses their attitude, knowledge and hazard perception in an additional paper-based risk assessment. In 2006, the training will be provided to 560 new apprentices.

### **Aims**

The aim of the programme is to provide specifically developed induction training for young workers in Centrica Fleet who need to drive as part of their job.

### **Scope**

The Centrica Fleet Trainee Induction Programme for young workers includes:

#### **1 Road risk assessment**

On the first day of induction, trainees attend a road safety session with Centrica Fleet.

The session starts with a road risk assessment, which is undertaken in a British Gas van on a one-to-one basis with a fleet approved driver trainer. The one-to-one driving assessment lasts one hour and covers all road types, junctions, roundabouts, reversing, various road signs and markings plus any other situations encountered during the assessment. The trainer points out driving errors to the trainee, who is expected to correct these errors during the remainder of the assessment. The driver's eyesight and licence are checked at the start of the assessment.

As a further road safety initiative, trainees undertake a paper-based risk assessment as well as the one-to-one in-vehicle assessment during the first week of induction. This additional road risk assessment will ensure any driving problems are highlighted and rectified.

## **2 Allocation of vehicle**

On completion of the driver risk assessment the trainee is rated as either 'low', 'medium' or 'high risk'. If additional driver training is needed, the trainee will not be given a van at this stage. They get a vehicle once Centrica Fleet and the driver trainer are satisfied with their ability.

## **3 Vehicle briefing**

The next stage includes a briefing which familiarises the trainee with the operation and correct use of the vehicle. This includes purchasing fuel, maintenance checks and who to contact for tyre and glass replacement, maintenance or repairs, and in the event of breakdown or collision. Drivers are also informed of any restrictions placed on the use of the vehicle by Centrica's insurance.

## **4 Road safety briefing**

Trainees are then given a road safety briefing developed by BRAKE. Several Centrica Fleet staff have been trained to deliver this briefing to their young employees. It covers 12 topics, each identified by a memorable instruction:

- belt up – front and back, and ensure children are correctly restrained
- slow up – abide by speed limits and only overtake if totally safe
- wake up – never drive tired and take breaks every two hours on long journeys
- sober up – 'just say no' to alcohol and drugs if driving
- look up – look out for people on bikes, horses and foot
- wise up – if it's night, bright or bad weather, slow down
- buck up – calm yourself before driving if stressed, angry or excited
- move up – adjust head restraints so the top is no lower than the top of your head to help prevent whiplash
- sharpen up – wear glasses or lenses if you need them
- shut up – switch your phone to voicemail
- back up – from the vehicle in front: it's your braking space in a crisis
- check up – check brakes, tyres, lights, mirrors and windows.

## **5 Dangerous driving**

The final session is a realistic DVD documentary for young people on the consequences of dangerous driving. It includes shocking real-life stories, images of road crashes and injured crash victims.

Centrica Fleet has collaborated with BRAKE on many aspects of the programme. BRAKE supplies the road safety briefing material and the DVD on dangerous driving and has also trained the presenters. Finally, vehicle collision

data are analysed every month to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Centrica Fleet has adapted the current induction for adult recruits to cover the above, with the exception of the one-to-one driver risk assessment. This is replaced by the paper-based driver risk assessment, which takes into consideration the driver's experience, knowledge, attitude, behaviour and hazard perception. Papers are marked by the service provider, who is a corporate sponsor of BRAKE. Results and best practice feedback are posted to the new recruits' home address. All results are collated in a central database, which is also used for the online assessments that are being introduced to all Centrica staff who drive as part of their normal duties.

### **Results and evaluation**

Centrica contracts an accident management company to manage all vehicle incidents from collision to repair. Incidents are reported on a monthly basis for analysis and benchmarking against other organisations. These data are used to track the success of the programme. In addition, the programme is evaluated quarterly using available statistics and discussions with BRAKE and other road safety organisations. Such discussions have resulted in an additional road safety initiative for the Vehicle Replacement Programme. The 3,500 new vehicles due to be brought into service during 2006 will be fitted with a speed limiter set at 70mph. They will also display a 70 sticker to ensure all other road users are aware of the speed restriction.

### **Problems**

The original induction programme was one hour long. Before starting the longer half-day inductions it was necessary to raise awareness of the importance of the more detailed

training throughout the organisation. This was quickly accepted as best practice.

Fleet staff were required to attend a half-day road safety course with BRAKE to allow them to present the road safety briefing. In addition, in-house training was needed to implement the paper-based road risk assessment and it was necessary to agree course timings to ensure the new programme fitted into the time slot provided.

### **Success**

The success of the programme is due to:

- 1 support and commitment from all levels of the company, from the directors and senior managers to the engineers. From the start of the programme awareness-raising and commitment were targeted
- 2 the holistic approach to the programme. Through the paper-based and in-vehicle assessments, the programme integrates different levels of attitudes, knowledge and skills related to road safety
- 3 vehicle collision and incident statistics being used regularly to update the programme. It is also possible to analyse the data to help bring the programme into line with new company initiatives.

### **Transferability**

The programme can be easily transferred to different companies with similar policies on health and safety. Although specific contexts will differ, the same principles will apply.

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