

Driver Selection and Management

Drivers are an essential component to self-managed fleets, equally as important as the vehicles themselves. Even if an organisation has a perfectly maintained fleet, poor quality drivers or lack of investment in driver training can lead to accidents, damages, cargo loss and possibly issues with fines or lawsuits.

Required Skills and Competences

Organisations must ensure that all employees involved in driving activities have the necessary competency to drive safely. Competence entails having appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, as well as behaviour.

Some of the required skills and competences for drivers are:

- Driving license.
- Respect of humanitarian values and adherence to the humanitarian charter and principles.
- Fitness to drive.
- Ability to apply different driving techniques: defensive driving, off-road driving, eco-driving, etc.
- Literacy in the working language and able to speak the local language.
- Respect and willingness to work with people from different ethnicities and origins.
- Experience with specific vehicles to use (4x4, motorbikes, etc.).
- Knowledge of basic mechanics.
- Good knowledge of country roads.
- Knowing what to do in an accident or emergency.
- Willingness for continuous improvement (driving skills deteriorate with time; possession of driving license of itself does not necessarily imply such competence).

Driving for work often entails lone driving without direct supervision from managers or other colleagues for prolonged periods. Drivers may also be required to travel and stay outside a base or find their own accommodation overnight.

Recruitment, Testing and Selecting

Agencies seeking to maintain their own vehicles and have a staff pool of drivers should ensure that the hiring is carried out conscientiously and skills and knowledge are clearly demonstrated. When recruiting drivers, agencies might consider:

- Asking for documentation to prove authorised license to operate the vehicle in question.
- Request a background check.
- Ask the applicant to demonstrate their driving skill first-hand in a safe location.
- Have technical questions prepared in advance.
- If possible, conduct drug screening.

Drivers' competence to drive safely should be assessed at the interview level and/or prior to the allocation of driving tasks. Assessment should take account of the driver's attitude, road safety knowledge and driving skills at the wheel as well as other evidence such as age, experience, accident and enforcement history, including penalty points status and past training record. The following can be used as assessment checklist:

1. General

- Years of driving experience.
 - Health issues or regular use of medicines which could affect driving.
 - Conduct a simple eyesight test by having the driver read a license plate number from a distance of 20 meters. When in doubt consult a medical person for a proper eyesight test.
 - Assess knowledge on local driving laws (i.e., maximum speeds in certain location, meaning of particular traffic signal).
 - Ask about previous experience with the type of test vehicle.
 - Familiarity with 4WD controls.
 - Knowledge on basic vehicle service.
 - Good practices to load a vehicle, specifically heavy or hazardous goods.
 - How to react in case of an accident.
 - Use of the Logbook.
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2. Vehicle and Driving Test

2.1) Vehicle check: Assess knowledge on what should be checked before starting the engine, why this should be checked and what should be done when faults are detected. Checks may include engine fluids; tires; spare wheel, jack and tools; looking for stains under the vehicle.

2.2) Before Starting Engine:

- Adjusts the seating and mirrors (yes/no)
- Ensures that seat-belts are fastened (yes/no)
- Is the vehicle out of gear, the clutch lever up and the handbrake on?
- Checks the instrument panel, lights and indicators (yes/no)
- Assess the knowledge on the meaning of the instrument panel lights

2.3) After Starting Engine:

- Listens for abnormal noise (yes/no)
- Checks the instrument panel, e.g. oil pressure light (yes/no)

2.4) Before Driving:

- Uses of mirrors and indicators (yes/no)
- Shows consideration for other traffic (yes/no)
- Drives off smoothly (yes/no)

2.5) While Driving:

- Respects the traffic rules and road signs (yes/no)
- Manoeuvres and control the vehicle correctly (yes/no)
- Uses mirrors and indicators (yes/no)
- Uses gears and controls correctly (yes/no)
- Maintains the right speed considering road condition, load and other traffic (yes/no)
- Drives defensive (i.e., leaving space between vehicles) (yes/no)
- Anticipates hazards (yes/no)
- Shows consideration for other traffic and passengers (yes/no)
- Shows consideration for the vehicle (i.e., no hard breaking) (yes/no)

2.6) Check Particular Manoeuvres:

- Emergency stop (Good/Correct/Bad)
- Hill start (Good/Correct/Bad)
- Reversing (Good/Correct/Bad)
- Urban driving (Good/Correct/Bad)
- Lane changing; overtaking (Good/Correct/Bad)
- Off-road driving (Good/Correct/Bad)
- 4W driving (Good/Correct/Bad)

3. Security Awareness

- Assess knowledge on main driving hazards in the area and measures to mitigate it
 - Handling main present hazards (i.e., checkpoints, car-jacking, crashes, etc.)
 - Behaviour during the assessment (i.e., confident, calm, ability to communicate)
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**4. Use of
Equipment
and Tools**

- High-jack
 - Vehicle recovery tools
 - Communications equipment (radio, sat-phone, etc.)
 - Uses equipment while driving (yes/no)
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Adapted from MSF Drivers Recruitment Test

Non-Professional Drivers (Staff)

In some circumstances, relying in professional drivers will be unnecessary and other staff will take the responsibility of driving themselves. This may happen when enrolling a driver is not cost-efficient but still there is a need of managing an owned fleet, including when reliable taxi services are not available, specific security risks require it, and more.

On some occasions a mixed solution may be possible, where professional drivers are the only ones allowed to drive during office hours and some categories of staff could be allowed to drive after office hours. Certain restrictions might be established in case of non-professional staff driving, including: distances and time limitations, restrictions people to be transported, limits on leisure usage, or other areas of concern.

In the case were non-professional staff is allowed/requested to drive the agency's vehicles, it is strongly recommended to define a policy framing the access to the service: who has the right to access it and for which purposes, administrative actions to do so, responsibilities from organisation and workers. There should also be basic procedures on sharing vehicles, including: schedules, reservation, keys management, parking instructions, and steps to take in case of incident.

In addition to holding a valid driving permit, the skills of the driver should be duly tested to ensure that he/she has the skills to drive the given vehicle in the given context.

Insurance policies should be reviewed to adapt coverage to the organisation's needs. If necessary, a clear policy on covering repair costs should be established and accepted by the staff.