Risk-Based Management of Nonregulated Fleets

In this interview, Peggy Ross, RN, M.S., COHN-S/CM/SM, COHC, CSP, Baxter Healthcare Corp.’s corporate manager, Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), and Kristin O’Driscoll, Baxter’s U.S. fleet manager, share their insights on risk-based management of nonregulated fleets.

TPS: Please provide a brief description of your professional backgrounds and of your positions as corporate manager, EHS, and U.S. fleet manager for Baxter Healthcare Corp.

PR: I have worked in the occupational health and safety field for more than 20 years. I joined Baxter as a regional EHS manager in 2002 and currently provide support for various aspects of safety, ergonomics, nonregulated fleet, case management and occupational health. I have presented at various national conferences and have been published in Professional Safety and AAOHN Journal. I currently serve on the ANSI/ASSE Z15 Accredited Standards Committee (ASC) Safety Requirements for Motor Vehicle Fleet Operations, the ORC/Mercer Motor Vehicle Safety Task Force, the Purdue/Calumet Academic Advisory Committee for the safety program and the American Board for Occupational Health Nurses Board of Directors.

KOD: I joined Baxter in 2005 and assumed responsibilities for managing the U.S. fleet. I actively participate on the Z15 ASC and with the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety. I am currently pursuing the Certified Automotive Fleet Manager designation.

TPS: How is a nonregulated fleet defined, and what risks can such a fleet present?

PR/KOD: The Baxter nonregulated fleet includes vehicles used for sales and service operations. It primarily includes leased automobiles used for employees who work remotely and visit customers. Also included are vehicles used on Baxter property by security or maintenance workers.

TPS: What is the best way to conduct a fleet audit? What should a fleet audit determine?

PR/KOD: A fleet audit should be completed by auditors experienced in nonregulated fleet who can assess how the fleet program and fleet risk are managed. The audit should evaluate policies and procedures, vehicle acquisition (to include safety, fuel efficiency and ergonomic considerations), driver qualifications and behaviors, risk assessment (what is carried in the vehicle, road, weather and driving challenges), vehicle maintenance, metrics and accident investigations. As an experienced auditor explores the process for how a fleet is managed, additional questions will arise.

TPS: What are the major elements of a fleet policy and program?

PR/KOD: The first and most important element of a policy and program is strong management support. Senior leadership plays an important role in emphasizing and reinforcing the business risk and value of sound fleet management and employee compliance. A clear, concise written policy should outline the scope, authorization, accident reporting and review, driver training, vehicle inspection/maintenance and disciplinary action. An effective safety program should identify high-risk drivers, focus on educating the driver and changing driver attitudes and have a clear intent to reduce accidents and injuries. A strong written program supports compliance with company policy.

TPS: In what ways can a company’s EHS department partner with fleet management to address risk among a nonregulated fleet?

PR/KOD: An active partnership between fleet management and EHS has provided guidance and education on the program’s overall safety aspects. Specific for Baxter, this includes ergonomics, risk assessment, accident review process and root cause analysis.


PR/KOD: Baxter used the Z15.1 standard as a model program to strengthen our current program.
The first and most important element of a policy and program is strong management support. Senior leadership plays an important role in emphasizing and reinforcing the business risk and value.

**TPS:** What challenges can a company encounter when conducting a root cause analysis?

**PR/KOD:** It is important not to stop at a proximate cause but to identify actual root causes.

**TPS:** How has the rise in distracted driving affected Baxter’s fleet policy and program?

**PR/KOD:** Baxter has implemented a global hands-free policy for telecommunications devices and does not permit smoking in vehicles.

**TPS:** What is the best way to measure the success of a nonregulated fleet’s risk management strategies? What successes has Baxter’s fleet experienced recently?

**PR/KOD:** Reducing accidents per million miles as well as reducing at-fault accidents/incidents.

**TPS:** What advice do you have for companies that wish to improve their fleet risk management program but are not sure where to start?

**PR/KOD:** Obtain management support, determine who you plan to target with program improvements and develop a strategic approach with a timeline to meet your goals. Consider an audit/gap analysis and benchmarking to identify opportunities for continual improvement. Engage key stakeholders. Review and strengthen the current policy and program and deploy.

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**Figure 1 Baxter Fishbone Diagram**

**Modified for Fleet Root-Cause Analysis**

![Fishbone Diagram](image-url)