

## On The Road: Driving Safety for Health Care Providers

This OSACH Fast Fact is intended to promote driving safety awareness, policies, and practices among health care employers, supervisors, and workers.

*The evolution of health care has seen a huge increase in the delivery of home care services. These require that many workers drive in the course of their duties. Amalgamation of organizations has also resulted in increased driving between sites by staff. Driving in the course of employment may add new risks to everyday driving hazards: tight time schedules, unforeseen demands, working alone and driving in unfamiliar areas are factors which should be considered.*

### General Duty

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) obligates employers to take all precautions reasonable to ensure the safety of their employees in the workplace. The OHSA applies in vehicles if employees are operating these in the course of their employment. Employers have a lot at stake every time a staff member gets behind the wheel. A driving safety program will help workers become better drivers — on and off the job. It takes commitment from employers, supervisors and workers to make the program a success.

### Suggested Employer Activities

- Take the first step — recognize that the driving staff perform in the course of employment is an activity subject to the same health and safety scrutiny as activities performed in traditional workplace settings.
- Involve the joint health and safety committee in a hazard assessment.
- Develop driving and transportation policies.
- Ensure drivers have appropriate insurance and valid licenses for the vehicles they drive.
- Develop clear protocols regarding client transportation.
- Encourage back injury prevention by providing information on good driving posture, stretching, and safe vehicle loading and unloading.
- Increase awareness of safe driving by means such as sponsoring defensive driving courses; holding a safe driving colouring contest for employees' families; holding a car wash; or conveying driving safety messages on posters, mail, and pay envelopes.
- Ask your local law enforcement agencies, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, and your OSACH consultant for assistance in promoting driving safety.
- Check out the Resources section of this Fast Fact!

### Suggested Worker Activities

- Identify the unsafe driving practices you have picked up along the way and make a continuing effort to correct them.
- Drive defensively.
- Take care of yourself emotionally and physically. Driving, like any activity, is affected by your physical and mental well-being. Get adequate rest and stay calm.
- Learn and practice ways to reduce driving stresses.
- Schedule enough time to drive safely to the next meeting or patient visit.

*continued...*

- Report near misses (near accidents), minor injuries and unsafe conditions to your supervisor. Remember that workers are required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act to report workplace hazards to their supervisor.
- Follow the rules of the road and your workplace policies, and be courteous toward other drivers and pedestrians.
- Keep a first aid kit in your car, and prepare for winter emergencies by carrying a blanket, candle, tin, matches, shovel, etc.
- If you are driving to an unfamiliar area, plan your route in advance.
- Make sure your vehicle is well maintained. Remember, it is your workplace as well as your personal transportation.
- Do a circle check of your vehicle before getting in.
- Fill up when your gas tank is half empty.
- Check road conditions by phone or on the web. In Ontario, road information is available from the Ministry of Transport at 1-800-268-4686 or [www.mto.gov.on.ca](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca).

### Suggested Supervisor Activities

- Participate in hazard assessments, and ensure that these include hazards associated with driving and vehicles.
- Advise workers of potential and actual hazards, including those on the road.
- Teach workers how to schedule visits so as to minimize the distance travelled and avoid driving in rush hour traffic.
- Demonstrate to your staff that their safety is important. Ensure that they know what to do in case of inclement weather, breakdown, accidents or illness.
- Educate employees on vehicle safety. We can always learn new skills and knowledge.
- Investigate and respond to workers' physical complaints. Driving even short distances can increase the risk of back pain.
- Respond promptly to complaints from other workers or clients about a worker's driving.
- Consider implementing a phone-in procedure to allow you monitor your employees' locations.

### Safety is Your Destination

Although driving may sometimes seem to be a pleasant break from regular duties it is actually a serious responsibility both on and off the job. Make a commitment to engage in training, procedures, and practices that promote safe driving.

### Resources

Canadian Automobile Association Safe Guard booklet, Winter Driving: [www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca)

Canada Safety Council Defensive Driving Course, Canada (available on CD-ROM): [www.safety-council.org](http://www.safety-council.org)

Ontario Ministry of Transportation 1999 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report: [www.mto.gov.on.ca](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca)

Transportation Health and Safety Association: [www.thsao.on.ca](http://www.thsao.on.ca)

Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare, Resource Document, *Health and Safety in the Home Care Environment*: [www.osach.ca](http://www.osach.ca)

Kathy Hilborn, *Driver's Back Manual*: [www.backsunlimited.com](http://www.backsunlimited.com) 1-877-460-2085



*The information contained in Fast Facts is correct at the time of publication.*

The Fast Facts series is copyrighted by the Ontario Safety Association for Community Healthcare (OSACH). Individual Fast Facts can be copied freely provided appropriate credit is given to OSACH.

For more information, please contact:

**Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare**

4950 Yonge Street, Suite 1505, Toronto, Ontario Canada M2N 6K1

Tel. (416) 250-7444 • Toll Free 1-877-250-7444 • Fax (416) 250-7484 • Web Site: [www.osach.ca](http://www.osach.ca)

FDRVE140 • Rev. 03/06 • ISBN 1-894878-00-0