

Establish a check-in system

The main purpose of a check-in system is to verify the well-being of employees. It is a quick process in which the employer communicates with the driver and/or their passenger(s) to verify their location, and that the trip is going as planned.

Check-ins are a best practice to apply whenever one or more of your employees are travelling in a vehicle. Section 3-24 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2020 - Working alone or at isolated place of employment* includes requirements to eliminate or reduce the risks when working alone or at isolated places of employment. As well, Section 3-24(4) of the regulations includes the requirement of an effective communications system to be established.

Check-in contacts

The check-in contact is the person with whom the travelling employee communicates. In some organizations, a supervisor, co-worker or admin assistant regularly acts as the check-in contact. There are several third-party check-in service providers available to organize and implement check-ins. Although these services come at a cost, they may be a more efficient option and do not require company staff resources to conduct monitoring.

An essential criterion to consider when designating a check-in contact is that they must remember when to expect check-in calls (a reminder alarm on a phone or computer is helpful). The check-in contact must be available to receive check-ins (near their phone) for the duration of the trip and they must know what to do if the traveler does not contact them as planned. Check-in contacts must have a copy of the trip plan.

Tip: Rather than tempting a driver to use their phone while driving, set up check-ins so that the onus is on the driver to initiate the check-in call at, or very near, the scheduled check-in time. That way, the driver can locate a good place to pull over and make the call.

Check-in intervals

How often the employer verifies the wellbeing of travelling employees should be determined by risk level - the greater the risk, the more frequent the check-in calls. A common default interval is every two hours. Below are a few scenarios demonstrating how employers have adjusted check-in frequency to recognize riskier driving circumstances.

1. **[Name]** works as a registered nurse providing mobile patient care. Today, she will be transporting a client to the hospital. This client has a history of sometimes becoming agitated and aggressive. The drive should take about 75 minutes. **[Name]** and her supervisor agree that **[Name]** will check-in when she arrives at the client's house (should be about 9:30), just before they start the drive (about 9:45), every half-hour during the drive (while **[Name]** is pulled over) and when she and the patient arrive at the hospital (about 11:00).
2. **[Name]** regularly drives between northern Saskatchewan communities selling heavy equipment products. Normally, **[Name]** checks-in every two hours. In winter, because of risky driving conditions, he checks-in every hour. However, there are a few places where **[Name]** knows the cell coverage is unreliable or non-existent. **[Name]** arranges with their service provider that he will contact them just before he leaves the reliable cell service area (call by 7:00) and then check-in when he is back in range (expect call by 8:45). **[Name]** and his manager have also agreed to purchase a satellite phone to avoid this gap in the future.
3. **[Name]** is a municipal employee responsible for maintaining trees and plants along city streets. The service truck he drives is bulky and difficult to park, so to avoid conflicts with busy traffic during the day **[Name]** works during the evening and night. Some of the streets **[Name]** works along go through risky neighborhoods. After discussing with his manager, they agreed that while he is driving/working in those known risky locations, **[Name]** will check-in every half-hour.

Tip: For employees driving alone, consider requiring employees to conduct an end of shift check. Make sure your trip plans include a check to verify the worker has safely completed their shift or reached their destination, or is no longer working alone.

Reliable communications

A reliable communication device is crucial to a successful check-in plan. When planning a trip, consider limitations that could create gaps - poor cell service or Wi-Fi availability, satellite and repeated dead zones. Accommodate those inconsistencies in the trip plan and check-in process.

Response procedure

Most of the time, check-ins simply verify the traveler is fine and the trip is proceeding as planned. However, in the event that the check-in call doesn't arrive, or a motor vehicle incident occurs, the organization must have a functioning emergency procedure to activate. It is essential that check-in contacts and travelers know what steps they are to take in the event of an emergency, before one takes place on the road.

Incident response

Your company should have a policy for motor vehicle incidents. Steps that may be included in your policy for employees could be:

1. Check themselves for injuries.
2. Secure the scene to ensure further harm does not occur.
3. Provide reasonable care for people who may have been injured.
4. Contact or have someone else contact 911.
5. Notify his/her supervisor or employer.
6. Begin collecting information.

Steps that can be included in your policy for supervisors/managers are:

1. Verify the scene is safe and secure.
2. Ensure 911 has been called if required, and assist in providing reasonable care if necessary.
3. Assist with collecting information.
4. Co-operate with law enforcement and emergency responders.
5. Notify the designated emergency contact of workers involved in a motor vehicle collision following your company's HR policy.
6. Initiate reporting the incident to authorities (corporate safety, police, insurance company, WCB Saskatchewan, etc.).

