



# PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON FLEET SAFETY

» Karvi Rana

India's road infrastructure coupled with human and environmental casualties make the Indian roads prone to accidents. It is thus imperative to focus on the safety of your fleet, products, and drivers. It will not only ensure your fleet and drivers' safety but will also help write the company's success story by delivering customer satisfaction. In the following feature, we explore the importance of fleet safety, the reasons for fleet crashes, measures to avoid them, and the role of technology in ensuring fleet safety.

**F**leet safety practices are often neglected in our society. Implementation of a fleet safety plan goes a long way in preventing accidents.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau report on Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India - 2019, the number of deaths in the year caused by trucks/lorries was 22637 and accounted for 14.6% of road accidents.

Government data reveals that we lose 3% of GDP in road crashes every year. An economic loss to the tune of ₹55,000 crore yearly is in dire need of attention and Fleet owners must give "Fleet Safety" a serious consideration.



**I think the whole supply chain ecosystem should come together for the sake of health & wellness of our truck drivers."**

**HIMA PARVATANENI**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Navata Supply Chain Solutions

**Tanvi Naik, Director, Reema Transport** says, "Fleet safety comprises of the Truck, Cargo and last but most importantly, the 'Driver'. The Driver is the one who has the maximum control over the complete safety of the fleet, himself, and other people on the road. The main concern is that no human life is endangered in transit."

Having the same concerns, **Siddharth Bhagat, Head of Multimodal Logistics, Seros Logistics** says, "We value foremost human life along with the safety of our asset. Our driver selection criteria and their safety tests are very exhaustive as they not only are responsible for their own lives and asset safety but also carry forward the

name of the organisation highlighting its safety track record."

*Apart from the challenge of keeping the driver safe in fleet crashes, the enterprises or fleet owners also face other unique challenges when it comes to fleet safety and management like:*

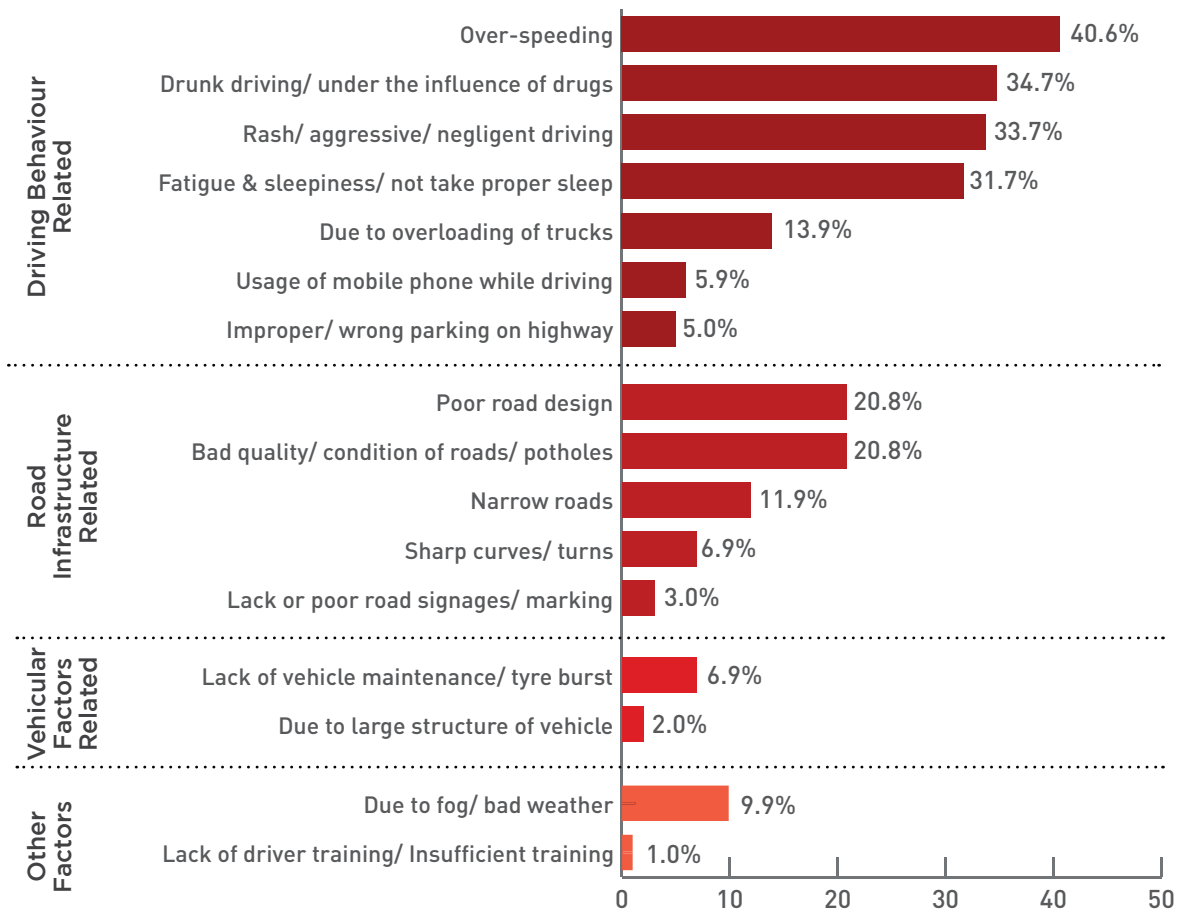
- Avoiding information overload
- Integrating fleet data into existing software systems
- Making sure all assets are fully utilised
- Fixing small problems fast
- Managing a geographically-dispersed team
- Finding specific fleet information quickly
- Controlling unauthorised use of company assets

"Timely maintenance is a must. Apart from that, vehicles need to be equipped with a host of features like power steering, air-conditioned cabins, better axle wheel structure, improved fuel combustion, better braking systems, and anti-skid mechanisms to ensure a comfortable and stress-free driving," says **Hima Parvataneni, Chief Executive Officer, Navata Supply Chain Solutions.**

### **FLEET CRASHES: REASONS AND MEASURES TO PREVENT THEM**

The reasons for accidents cited by truck drivers across India are mainly due to three factors

## Reasons for crashes involving truck drivers (cited by fleet owners)



Source: SaveLIFE Foundation

which are the Human Factor, the Machine Factor, and the Environmental factor.

According to a survey done by Statista on the reasons behind truck accidents, over-speeding was stated as the major cause for road crashes by truck drivers as of February 2020. Fatigue and sleepiness were stated as the second major reason for road accidents among 38 percent of truck drivers.

While talking about these three factors, Ms Naik mentions that the main reasons for commercial fleet crashes are Driver carelessness like drunk driving, speeding, distracted driving, tailgating, etc. "In addition to this, we must acknowledge

the fact that the ghastly conditions of our roads are also a major contributor towards unsafe driving," she shares.

Ms Parvataneni who also mentions bad road infrastructure as one of the main reasons for fleet crashes, says, "Although the National Highways have greatly improved since the introduction of the golden quadrilateral, the state highways are still a far cry from safe driving. The road design and infrastructure around the road needs to improve. Proper road signs need to be installed so that the vehicle does not run into culverts or dividers. There should be more medical and vehicle repair facilities lining roads of the highways."



**Government has now regulated loading capacity, speed limits, driving hours and ensured safety features in vehicles and this is generating interest of people in coming to this sector of profession."**

**SS BHAVAN**  
**GM- Fleet Maintenance**  
**Varuna Logistics**

While bad infrastructure is considered as one of the main reasons for road accidents, the constant infrastructure development has brought down the number of accidents. According to a Statista survey, poor road designs account for only 9.4% of accidents.

However, drunk driving accounted for 30.3%, rash driving 23.7%, lack of vehicle maintenance 9%, overloading 8.2%, and bad weather accounted for 7.2% of the accidents.

Apart from this, Mr Bhagat also brings to light the external factors leading to fleet crashes in India. He says, "In India we have many accidents

happening due to the stray cattle's and ignorance of pedestrians like jay walking. Most of the trucks do not follow the lane earmarked for the movement of the heavy vehicles which leads to the smaller passenger vehicles also not being able to follow the traffic rules leading to accidents."

To bring down the number of fleet crashes, the government of India has actively taken several initiatives. Speaking of those initiatives, **SS Bhavan, GM - Fleet Maintenance, Varuna Logistics** says, "Government has addressed the issue through initiatives like

Compulsory driver training for commercial vehicle driving license, Major enhanced penalty on - compliance of Motor vehicle act regulations, setting up of driver training institutes across major towns of India, improvement of road conditions especially highways, major changes in CMVR Rules to ensure maximum safety to driver and vehicle, vehicle scrap policy wherein vehicle beyond a certain age cannot be driven on road, stricter environmental norms ensuring better vehicle maintenance, etc."



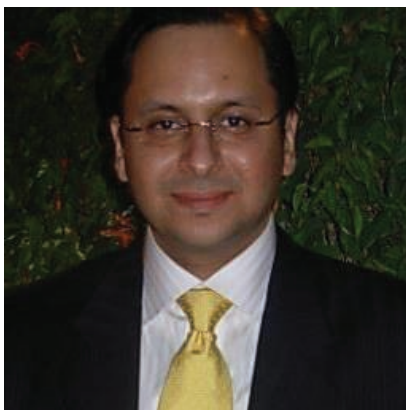
“Although a series of initiative have been taken by the government there is a lack of seriousness when it comes to abide by them,” Mr Bhagat pointed out. “The Government has laid down strict rules for the movement of heavy vehicles but they are flouted and there are no strict penalty mechanism due to which there are has been no seriousness to abide by the rules,” he adds.

Thus, to control and minimise fleet crashes, it is important that the fleet owners also address the issue and bring about the much-needed change in the ecosystem.

7. **Driver counselling before every trip commencement.**
8. **Monitoring of vehicle and driver 24X7 while on road**
9. **Compulsory night halt between 3 AM and 5 AM, the time when a majority of the sleepiness related accidents occur**
10. **Use of good quality road-worthy tyres only with zero compromises.**

**FLEET SAFETY DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO DRIVER CRISIS?**

India accounts for 67% of the freight movement via road. However, the number of drivers in



**Our driver selection criteria and their safety tests are very exhaustive as they not only are responsible for their own lives and asset safety but also carry forward the name of the organisation highlighting its safety track record.”**

**SIDDHARTH BHAGAT**  
 Head of Multimodal Logistics  
 Seros Logistics

*On the steps taken to address the issue of fleet crashes by the fleet owners, Mr Bhavan suggests the following steps:*

1. **Vehicles procured and body/containers custom fabricated from authorised vendors and ensuring 100% compliance of CMVR Norms**
2. **Driver Training before hiring**
3. **Driver training post-hiring of different types with a focus on the safety of man, machine, and material**
4. **The facility of insurance to drivers so that their immediate family members can get some benefits in case of any mishap while on duty.**
5. **Best of maintenance practices to ensure safe and secured journey for drivers**
6. **Compulsory 100% safety check of the vehicle before leaving the hub and post-loading.**

the nation are just a handful. Truck driving as a job is looked down upon in the nation. Also, drivers are dissatisfied with their profession due to low and irregular income and day-to-day harassment from officials.

“Earlier there was not much or almost no focus on driver safety which resulted in driver causalities. There was no immediate relief to immediate family members of drivers in case of any mishap. Past experiences of drivers and their family created a fear psychosis in the minds of willing drivers causing scarcity of drivers,” states Mr Bhavan.

With this scarcity of drivers in the nation, the handful of truck pilots operating bear the burden to transport a vital portion of the country’s freight



**The Government has a major role to play but along with them it is we the people who need to be brought to our senses and practice road safety norms."**

**TANVI NAIK**

Director

Reema Transport

and work beyond hours, which hampers their health and results in casualties in the journey.

A research revealed that 53% of drivers suffer from some health issues; while 23% battle lack of sleep, about 18% face physical stress, and 12% mental stress.

To avoid or reduce the number of fleet crashes, an immediate action in regards to their work-life balance is imperative.

Ms Naik says, "Logistics companies can work together in establishing common rest facilities. This would not only be cost-effective but will help to establish more of these facilities across the country, especially in remote areas. Logistic Service Providers should strive to provide more work-life balance for the drivers."

Portraying a similar thought, Ms Parvataneni says, "Drivers should be treated with immense respect and dignity. Social media pages of

## ACCORDING TO A SURVEY BY SAVE LIFE FOUNDATION ON INDIAN TRUCK DRIVERS

More than 6 out of 10 (62%) respondents felt unsafe while driving on the roads.

On an average, respondents drive for nearly 12 hours in a day and cover a distance of 417 km daily.

Almost 50% of the respondents said they drive vehicles even if they are feeling fatigued or sleepy.

Respondents confessed they did not undergo any formal training before getting a driving license.

More than 1 in 5 (22%) respondents said they take some kind of drugs during trips.





Source: SaveLIFE Foundation

logistics can thus greatly help in promoting a positive ‘brand image’ of the drivers, which can in turn help elevate their self-esteem.”

There should be an umbrella of social security schemes for the drivers like insurance, provident fund, and education and health care facilities for their families. Navata provides free medical care for the workers at India’s largest autonagar, Vijayawada, she added.

Such facilities and respect could attract more professionals which would, in turn, reduce the overall burden and hence reduce the on-road casualties.

**TECHNOLOGY: A POTENTIAL TOOL TO CONTROL FLEET CRASHES**

Technology has been a game-changer for the whole logistics industry and it can be a game-changer with respect to fleet crashes as well.

The implementation of telematics in ones’ fleet can provide the owners with real-time insights to create new improvement plans that can help change driver’s behaviour, improve driver safety and get vehicle status & location.

Also, it can help set up alerts for unsafe behaviour like speeding and harsh braking to help one stay informed and rectify any issues. This level of visibility helps cultivate trust with your team, encourages safe driving, and provides insight into vehicle maintenance.

Furthermore, fleet management software can also be leveraged for fleet safety. This not only provides a fast and easy way to schedule vehicles, but it also keeps a comprehensive record of assignment histories like vehicle usage and accident history.

Leveraging the above two technology allows the fleet owners to make connections regarding any recurring issues with certain drivers or assets.

Another technology, automatic emergency braking can also help avoid crashes. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a research group supported by auto insurers in its 2020 report says, that using Automatic emergency braking and forward-collision warnings could prevent more than 40% of rear-end crashes.

Trucks with collision warning systems reduced rear crashes by 44%, while automatic emergency braking cut rear crashes by 41%, the study found.

Truckers and drivers need to make their fleet tech-enabled for the safety of their fleet and truck pilots. While the implementation of such a system might feel a bit heavy on the overall cost, in the beginning, it will surely save a lot on cost in the long run and will be beneficial for their fleet as well as their fleet drivers. 