Summer 2012 Q&A

Q.

With the spate of tornados and other severe weather that occurred earlier this year, what best practices are fleets using to alert and/or re-route drivers while on the road?

A.

1) We use our onboard computer’s email system to alert our drivers of changes to the original plan whether operational, customer, or weather related.

2) We alert the drivers to the bad weather and allow them to make the best decisions in interest of their safety and well-being.

3) Our drivers are told in the case of emergency, if possible head to the closest one of our stores where they can get help and be safe.  IF none is available they are told to trust their instincts and get to the safest location.

4) We have in cab GPS communication.  Weather is monitored by both dispatch and our Loss Prevention/Security department, and alerts are sent to the drivers to take cover if necessary.

5) One company provided a checklist, which follows:

Being prepared and having a game plan is crucial when normal operations and distribution functions are disrupted by a significant event, expected or unexpected. Thus the purpose behind this checklist.

1. **Communications**
   1. Laminated Driver Cab Cards with a Current List of:
      1. Drivers; their cellular phone, direct-connect and home phone numbers
      2. Key branch management personnel, their cellular phone, direct-connect and home phone numbers
      3. Prime Vendors/Key Accounts; their contact phone numbers and email address, and their Sales Representative and contact information
      4. Support businesses (lessors, repair outlets, tire vendors, etc.); their contact phone number
   2. State and Local Support Agencies – **NOTE:** Where possible, use the road cameras provided on some of the below websites to view road conditions.
      1. Website Pages for:
         1. Weather ([www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com), [www.accuweather.com](http://www.accuweather.com))
         2. State DMV (<http://dmvlist.com/>, <http://www.dmv-department-of-motor-vehicles.com>
         3. Local Radio Stations (<http://www.radio-locator.com/cgi-bin/page?page=states> )
         4. CB Radios – Our company-provided CB Radios provides the following weather notification tools:
            1. 7 NOAA Weather Channels – Instant access to 7 National Weather Channels, 24 hours a day, in all 50 states.
            2. Emergency Weather Alert – Alerts you if threatening weather is nearby with an alert tone even when CB is turned off.
2. **Driver Preparation and Sustainment**
   1. Determine each driver’s availability and ability to work in emergency situations. Identify which drivers live closest to the branch versus those drivers that have a longer or tougher commute.
   2. Ensure drivers are:
      1. Equipped with an overnight bag, and
      2. The essential item they need in their cab such as safety vest, blanket, gloves, extra food or water, telephone numbers of customers and branch personnel as well as the other drivers. Please do not forget the lessor’s emergency number and tire vendor number.
   3. Ensure drivers have communicated with their family members and they provide them with your telephone numbers to contact in an emergency.
   4. Determine hours of service available to each driver.
3. **Equipment Preparation and Sustainment**
   1. If available, drivers need to have appropriate fueling cards.
   2. Copy of any operation or hours of service waivers, if granted by the State or Federal Government.
   3. Full fuel tanks:
      1. In advanced of the warning, fuel tanks need to be fueled.
      2. If onsite fuel suppliers are used, contact needs to be made in advance to discuss fueling needs and their availability.
      3. Identify a second fuel source as a backup. Contact and make arrangements.
      4. If onsite fuel is not guaranteed and time allows, have drivers fuel up before returning to the branch.
   4. Other vehicle fluids (brake line antifreeze, windshield wiper fluid, coolant, DEF, oil, etc.) need to be checked during the pre-trip/post-trip inspection. This product should be available at the branch in small quantities.
   5. Cell phone, cell phone charger, CB Radios and GPS devices installed and working. If GPS is not available, then maps need to be purchased.
   6. Give the driver a lessor location directory book, or go to the website to find the locations along the route.
4. **Customer Management**
   1. Make sure customer accounts are clearly identified and protected for private fleet only delivery.
   2. Non-Key accounts – use a third party shipper for these accounts when current road conditions prevent MedTrans drivers from safely making the deliveries.
   3. Sales and Customer Service – keep these two internal customers updated of any changes or ongoing delays until operations can return to normal.
5. **Transportation Support**
   1. Private fleet operaations
      1. Current driver availability, access to work, and hours of service
      2. Temp Agency Contacts for Temp Drivers support
      3. List of key accounts with contact information
      4. Support Agency availability
   2. **Corporate Staff Support**
      1. Support staff in place and readily available
      2. Provide assistance where required with weather information, customer information
      3. Seek DOT operation waiver, if required to operate when prohibited by state and local officials, and for Hours of Service, if needed
6. **Delivery Considerations**
   1. Downward Angled Loading Docks – Drivers must avoid backing into these ice covered, or snow and water filled areas in which:
      1. The tractor and/or truck cannot depart because of ice and/or snow, which prevents traction and the ability of the power unit to pull the weight up the incline. These areas must be cleared and cleaned to allow good traction. In some instances, drivers maybe be able use their snow tire chains to help them get out of dock areas.
      2. The rear axles of the trailer or truck can be submerged under water allowing water to seep into the vent wholes on top of the rear axle(s) leading to bearing failure. These areas must be water-free or no more than 6 inches in depth.
   2. Road Closures Due to Weather Events – Location management needs to monitor weather for ice and snow covered roads as well as flooding. When an event occurs that prevents safe travel or prevents traffic movement for a predicted amount of time, the branch must:
      1. In advance of the weather predicted weather, contact the customers or customers’ sales representative and encourage preorder or advance order requests to allow them to survive the pending weather.
      2. Determine if there is an alternate route that provides safe passage.
      3. Determine if tire chains can be applied and that applying the chains would allow safe operation of the vehicle.
      4. Contact the affected customers and advise them of the delivery status, or if delivery is possible at all.
      5. Monitor and manage drivers’ hours of service, and begin working on a backup plan to safely meeting the next day or remaining week deliveries. Talk with your Temp Agencies and 3rd Party Transport companies.
      6. Work with warehouse management to ensure orders are picked, palletized, and ready for delivery. Avoid bring drivers in to work if the product is not ready to be delivered.
      7. Determine the drivers’ availability during the weather event.
      8. Determine if drivers need to stay at a nearby hotel, and make preparatory arrangements.