

UNDERSTANDING FLEET MANAGEMENT IN A TRANSPORT COMPANY

1 INTRODUCTION

Fleet operation or fleet management is a function which allows companies to rely on transportation in their business to remove or minimize the risks associated with vehicle investment, improving efficiency, productivity and reducing their overall transportation costs, providing 100% compliance with government legislation (Duty of Care) and many, many more (Choudhary, 2013). Ratcliffe (1987) posits five main fleet management activities which are:

- Routing and scheduling;
- Fuel management;
- Vehicle acquisition;
- Vehicle maintenance; and
- Driver briefing and debriefing

These activities are supervised by the fleet managers and primarily, a policy is formulated so as to serve as a guide for these activities. These activities help in achieving effective and efficient fleet (vehicle) management. Better vehicle utilization lowers operating cost though better planning. Implementing decent fleet management has proven to reduce fleet size and operating costs, while increasing speed of vehicle delivery to national offices (Martinez, Stapleton, and Van Wassenhove, 2011).

However the current century has brought with it a new workplace, one in which every employee must adapt to a rapidly changing society with constantly shifting demands and opportunities. This has called for organizations to adopt a strategic method in managing some aspects of work.

The fleet (vehicle) section of an organization is therefore one of the areas which contributes greatly to the achievement of organizational goal. This is because the fleet section is responsible for the movement of both people and goods of the organization which helps to speed up business operations and processes. In other words, the pressure to deliver faster and cheaper has made vehicle utilization an important aspect of fleet management (Jonsson, 2008; Waters, 2009).

The pivotal role played by the fleet section has prompted organizations to embrace fleet management. Fleet (vehicle) management can include a range of fleet management functions such as

- Vehicle financing;
- Vehicle maintenance;
- Vehicle telemetric (tracking and diagnostics);
- Driver management;
- Fuel management; and
- Health and safety management

Martinez, Stapleton and van Wassenhove (2011) define field vehicle fleet management as: “decision-making for re-positioning and load assignment for groups of transportation means operating in job locations remote from regular facilities, offices, etc. to optimize performance”.

2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to understand what fleet management entails.

The specific objectives are to:

- Establish the concept of fleet management; and
- Discuss the challenges of fleet management.

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