Psychometric driver assessment

Cranfield University and driver training specialist Peak Performance have combined to launch an online driver risk assessment developed specifically for company car and van drivers, and based on psychometric principles.

Called the Fleet Driver Risk Index (FDRI), the ground-breaking new product is based on 20 years of academic research into the psychology of driver behaviour and uses psychometric principles to predict how company drivers are likely to behave behind the wheel.

Human factors contribute to around 95% of road traffic accidents and this new approach allows fleet operators to more accurately identify high-risk driver behaviour and implement the specific training needed to tackle it, thereby reducing the potential for accidents.

The FDRI has been developed by driver behaviour expert, Dr Lisa Dorn *(pictured)*, current star of BBC One's *Road Rage* series, and director of the Driving Research Group at Cranfield University. Dr Dorn is also research director of DriverMetrics, a new company set up by Cranfield to handle its launch and implementation.

"In addition to identifying those drivers at high risk of RTAs, the Fleet Driver Risk Index also shows some of the reasons why people are at high risk. By identifying the specific behaviours that contribute to a driver's risk of accident, we are able to specify more targeted training interventions aimed at reducing the risk," says Dr Dorn.

A series of training courses has been developed by Peak Performance specifically to address the behavioural issues identified by DriverMetrics, which selected Peak as its driver training partner to handle all subsequent and identified training needs after a selection process that included other leading driver training companies in the UK.

The courses feature workshop training including a 'What's My Risk' section – which helps drivers understand their driving behaviour – and on-the-road personal focus training, one-to-one with a Peak instructor, for those classified as a high risk.

The FDRI, which classifies drivers under three main driver types – 'high', 'medium' and 'low' risk, measures 12 driver behaviour factors and provides a number of profile permutations ranging from low to high on all of these 12 factors. It also assesses the age, gender, mileage, task, driving experience, penalty points and previous accidents of the driver taking part.

In order to maximise its benefits, the FDRI should be undertaken by all employees who regularly drive for work. Individual drivers answer questions on a secure, user-friendly accessible website which can be customised and branded for each individual company, and is accessible from any PC with an internet connection and a standard web browser.

Within an hour of the online assessment being completed, the driver receives the results via email, while a designated person, usually the fleet manager, is given an executive summary of the individual driver's profile, identifying the risk of likely involvement in RTAs and the personal attributes which contribute to this result. The profile also recommends specific training interventions.

In addition, an online Management Information System (MIS) allows fleet managers to monitor and manage the results of the assessment and to take appropriate actions where necessary, thus contributing towards discharging the company's Duty of Care to its drivers. Fleet managers can use the MIS to readily identify those drivers who have failed to take the assessment and send them online reminders to ensure they complete the course.

A list of published papers relating to the development of the FDRI is available at www.drivermetrics.co.uk.

Frequently asked questions

- How do we know that a driver will not 'cheat' on the FDRI?
  A 'lie scale' is built into the assessment. This is a proven way to identify candidates who are trying to present themselves in a favourable light.

- How much does it cost?
  The FDRI costs between £15 and £25 per driver, depending on the number of people taking the assessment.