



VITALS

A Weekly Safety Newsletter For Medical Transport Professionals

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A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

"A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words" is a phrase that we have heard many times, but it has no greater applicability than in the instance of a vehicle crash. For years companies with commercial vehicles have made disposable cameras available to their employees in an attempt to objectively document crash-related facts. This allows an event analysis that provides protection to employees and companies in the face of false claims. On the other hand, when liability exists said documentation helps estimate the true economic worth of the event.

In today's litigious society, it is no surprise that companies with commercial vehicles are targets for attorneys, who anticipate that even when not at fault, companies will pay small claims to avoid the costs of legal defense and economic uncertainties imposed by jury decisions. You have probably seen television commercials from attorneys who proclaim a specialty in commercial vehicle accidents. Some attorneys receive formal, academic training in crash reconstruction. They would not go to this effort and expense if they did not perceive commercial crashes as significant sources of revenue.

The fact that some supervisory personnel have digital or cell phone cameras does not preclude the utility of disposable cameras. The immediate availability of a disposable camera provides the opportunity to obtain an immediate record of the scene, vehicle condition and other pertinent facts. Timing is critical, because the initial scene may be altered by weather, movement of vehicles, or other circumstances. Promptly taken photographs may be used to offset inaccurate "eye-witness accounts."

Disposable cameras are less expensive than digitals or cell phones with photographic capabilities. They should be designated to be used only for crash-related investigations as part of a "Crash Investigation Kit" that is implemented via a formal "Crash Investigation Policy". A disposable camera is easier to isolate in the custody of the person responsible for claims management. Pictures generated by a disposable camera may subsequently be digitalized and stored on a disk for convenience. Small cameras can be customized to fit specific user needs and are available to THOMCO customers at special prices.

A culture of safety requires that drivers be educated to perceive a disposable camera as a tool that protects them and the company. Everyone needs to be aware of the true economic impact of a crash. The assets a company can retain by the immediate, proper use of a disposable camera as part of a formal crash investigation process in only one event readily justifies the small cost of the camera.

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