

Instructor Notes: Every New Year brings an opportunity for fresh starts and new beginnings. Use this occasion to develop a culture of adult learning in your towing business. By promoting continuing education, you will get a smarter, safer employee, which leads to a more loyal, satisfied customer. What have you got to lose?

Safety Meeting 2015 #1 – Continuing Education – Towing 101



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Even though the towing industry is constantly changing, why do most towing operators stay the same? Is it pride? Is it laziness? I doubt either of the two but I do suspect it's because most towers don't know where to start. Continuing education is required for most business professionals and towing operators are no exception. We need to stay current with the latest developments, skills and new technologies to remain proficient in our field. The following are a few ideas any towing business could adopt anytime.

Who can be a teacher?

The term “andragogy” describes the science of adult learning and the cool part is most of us can or have already done this. If you've ever shown a new towing operator a different way of hooking up or how to safely change a tire on the side of the road, you are a teacher and you didn't even know it. Since adults are primarily “hands on” learners, I am going to assume when you showed that new tower something ... you physically demonstrated it rather than just talked about it. The great thing about teaching is that when one teaches, both learn.

In-house learning

In-house training can be conducted by the company owner, a manager or by an experienced towing operator and can include all sorts of topics but should be relevant to your business. The training topics are endless and only bound by your imagination. Formal safety training meetings are preferred, but impromptu ten-minute training drills are often just as beneficial. If you aren't sure how to host your own towing safety training program consider signing up for *Tow Times'*

TowSafe program in which drivers study various safety related topics and challenge quarterly tests. (For information on the TowSafe program contact Carol Snelling at 407-706-6795, email sales@towtimesmag.com.)

Outside training opportunities

There are many training opportunities outside your business if you know where to look:

Ask your customers. If you tow for a dealership, ask them to host a short training meeting at their location where you and your drivers can look at the new models to determine the safest way to hook up. Don't wait until the first tow to try and learn.

Talk to your insurance company. Ask to see if they have any safety programs you can present at your company. Most do and others will find you one if you ask. It's in their best interest to make your company safer.

Look online. There is a world of information at your fingertips. Look for topics relative to your business. One example is www.evsaftytraining.org where they offer free safety training when working on, in or around electric vehicles.

Ask your towing association. Most offer free training during their annual conventions or at dramatically discounted rates for their members. If you aren't taking advantage of this benefit, you're wasting your dues.

Become certified. There are a few great towing and recovery training programs that you can take advantage of including the TRAA National Certification program and WreckMaster's training programs. Both provide reference guides and certification tests, but only WreckMaster includes hands-on training.

Consider a professional development course. If you are a company owner, a manager or aspiring to be one, keep in mind that most community colleges offer professional development courses in leadership, delegation, business productivity, etc. Check out the Towing and Recovery Management Summit (towsummit.com) started last year by *Tow Times*, it's a two-day management education program specifically for towing company owners.

Discover what training your vendors can provide. When you buy a new tow truck, ask for some hands-on training. If you purchased towing software, make sure training is included to maximize your purchase. Ask your parts provider to let you know when a manufacturer makes training available.

Seek higher education. If you haven't already done so, finish up high school and consider taking college classes at night or on the weekend. Forty percent of the nation's 16 million colleges and university students are 25 years of age or older. It's never too late to make a big difference in your life.

Wrap up

Remember, nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending. Use this opportunity to challenge yourself by making a New Year's resolution to become a more educated, more professional towing and recovery operator. Never stop learning because life never stops teaching.

If you need any ideas on how to prepare and present this information to your drivers, please call me at 847-894-0042 or email me at pgratz548@comcast.net.