



Outcomes and Insights:

NWRA FOCUS on Fleet Safety Cohort

Why This Cohort Matters:

Waste and recycling fleets operate in some of the most dynamic operating environments in transportation. Drivers navigate residential streets and complex urban environments, interact with vulnerable road users, operate large vehicles in tight spaces, and perform physically demanding work.

Recognizing these challenges, NWRA partnered with Together for Safer Roads to provide member organizations access to practical fleet safety leadership training via TSR's FOCUS on Fleet Safety initiative, a comprehensive program designed to strengthen safety culture, improve driver engagement, and support long-term operational excellence.

More than a training program, the cohort model created opportunities for safety leaders to share experiences, learn from one another, and develop solutions to common industry challenges.

At a Glance:

The latest FOCUS on Fleet Safety cohort brought together 13 safety professionals representing 7 organizations from across the waste and recycling industry.

Over six sessions, participants worked together to strengthen safety culture, explore practical approaches to driver engagement and leadership, and identify opportunities to enhance safety performance within their organizations.

Through a combination of peer learning, collaboration, and applied problem-solving, cohort members developed actionable ideas and strategies that can support safer fleet operations long after the program concluded.

COHORT STATISTICS:

- 7 Organizations Represented
- 13 Safety Participants
- 5-Star Course Rating across all 6 modules
- 3 Organizational Action Plans Created

Participants later adopted the name *"The Safe Route Squad,"* reflecting the collaborative spirit that defined the cohort experience.

Building Blocks for Safer Fleet Operations:

Over the course of the program, participants completed a series of practical exercises designed to strengthen key safety capabilities within their organizations. **Examples of work completed throughout the cohort included:**

Safety Vision Alignment

Participants strengthened the foundations of their safety culture by creating or refining organizational safety vision statements that help align leadership, employees, and operational decision-making around shared safety goals.

1. Learner's response and notes

Vision Statement Draft:

Operational excellence starts with safety - because no result matters more than protecting our people.

Excerpt from Participant's Vision Statement Development Assignment

Workforce Development Planning

Utilizing FOCUS tools and templates, participants evaluated current training practices, identified opportunities for improvement, and developed plans to strengthen workforce development and support long-term safety performance.

Safety Goals:

Now that you've collected data on your lagging indicators, consider whether you can improve any of those indicators through better employee training and development.

Traffic Safety Violations
Lost Workdays
Collisions

Which indicator would you like to target and how? Consider those with the highest frequency or potential for severity of injury.

Traffic Safety Violations and Collisions can be directly related to each other. [We will be] Adding a highlighted focus on defensive driving skills and incorporating them into the conversations during safety driver meetings.

Also, implementing the After-Action Reviews from previous incidents/ violations with the current drivers is a sharing of best practices.

Excerpt from Participant's Training Needs Analysis

Leadership and Safety Culture

Participants examined how leadership behaviors, communication, and accountability influence organizational safety culture and explored strategies for strengthening engagement throughout their organizations.

Data-Informed Safety Initiatives

Cohort members examined leading and lagging indicators to identify opportunities for more proactive risk management, stronger safety performance, and better-informed operational decision making.

Driver Coaching and Motivation Strategies

Participants developed new approaches to improve driver engagement, recognition, and performance through coaching, communication, and motivational strategies that support safer day-to-day operations.

Technology Adoption and Change Management Plans

Participants explored opportunities to enhance telematics, video-based safety systems, and broader fleet technology systems in their respective organizations to maximize the return on those investments by strengthening coaching and incentives.

Topics that Resonated Most with Participants

While participants represented different organizations and operating environments, several topics consistently surfaced throughout discussions, exercises, and peer exchanges.

Leadership Shapes Safety Culture

Participants frequently reflected on the role leadership visibility, communication, and accountability play in sustaining strong safety cultures and influencing day-to-day behaviors.

Driver Engagement Matters

Discussions reinforced the importance of coaching, motivation, and recognition in supporting both safety performance and workforce engagement.

Data Informs Better Decisions

Participants explored how leading and lagging indicators can help organizations better understand risk, track progress, and support more proactive decision making.

Technology Adoption Requires Change Management

Participants highlighted the importance of workforce buy-in, communication, and leadership support when managing safety technology.

Collaboration Creates Value

Peer learning emerged as a recurring strength of the cohort experience, providing opportunities to exchange ideas, discuss common challenges, and learn from real-world experiences.

Participant Feedback:

Participant feedback remained consistently strong throughout the cohort, with every course module receiving a five-star rating.

Beyond the ratings, participants frequently highlighted the value of practical tools, peer learning, and opportunities to step back from day-to-day operations to think more strategically about safety.

Practical Tools and Resources

Participants valued the program's emphasis on tools that could be immediately applied within their organizations.

"One of my biggest takeaways was the Training Needs Analysis plan. It was a simple tool we could use to reflect on what we already have in place and what we still need to put in place."

Peer Exchange Program

One of the defining features of the cohort experience was the opportunity for participants to learn from one another.

While each fleet operates within its own unique environment, participants found common ground around many of the challenges facing today's safety leaders – from building stronger safety cultures and engaging drivers, to implementing new technologies and managing organizational change.

The cohort created a space for open discussion, practical problem-solving, and the sharing of real-world experiences. Participants exchanged ideas, explored approaches that had worked within their organizations, and learned from both successes and setbacks.

For many participants, these peer-to-peer conversations became one of the most valuable aspects of the cohort experience, demonstrating the power of collaboration in advancing safer fleet operations.

Motivation and Driver Engagement

The module on motivation and coaching resonated strongly with participants seeking new ways to engage drivers.

"I loved learning about the different types of motivation—intrinsic and extrinsic. One of my biggest takeaways was how to bring this information into our organization and into how we think about managing our drivers."

Leadership and Safety Culture

Participants frequently highlighted the value of stepping back from day-to-day operations to think more strategically about leadership and culture.

"The program helped connect safety leadership, training, and technology into one framework that we can actually use."

From Learning to Action

Strong safety cultures do more than help prevent crashes and injuries. They contribute to stronger workforce engagement, improved operational consistency, and a greater ability to identify and manage risk.

The *Safe Route Squad* cohort demonstrated the value of creating space for safety professionals to **learn from one another, exchange practical ideas, and reflect on opportunities for continuous improvement.** By bringing together organizations facing similar challenges, the cohort reinforced the important role collaboration can play in advancing safer fleet operations across the waste and recycling industry.