Fleet safety and risk management experts agree, simply including safety directives in fleet policy documents alone does not improve risk management or preventable accident rates. Policy must emerge from a foundational corporate value that generates an overall culture of safety — overtly validated and supported by management from the highest level down.

Fleet and safety managers at companies recognized for industry-leading efforts in creating and maintaining such a culture report several elements are critical to its success and effectiveness. Chief among those elements is senior management leadership, commitment of financial and staff resources, accountability, and communication. Underlying a pro-safety corporate stance is not only sincere concern for employee well-being, but also the responsibility to protect the company’s liability exposure.

At Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., safety initiatives have the “full backing” of not only sales management, but the company board of managing directors, which originated a new program described as the “next generation of a safety culture” at the 125 year-old pharmaceutical company, said David Redalieu, associate director of health and safety.

This high-level support is essential to the fleet safety program’s continual refinement.

Based in Ridgefield, Conn., Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is the world’s largest privately-held pharmaceutical company. It is committed to the research and development of innovative medicines that help improve the lives of patients and their families. The company also represents the primary U.S. clinical research and marketing arm for products developed by other units of its Germany-headquartered parent company Boehringer Ingelheim.

The U.S. company sales fleet includes more than 2,900 vehicles, primarily passenger cars, SUVs, and vans.

Redalieu and Lee Miller, fleet services manager, head the fleet safety committee, which meets every 2-3 months. A cornerstone of the company’s fleet safety program, the committee includes corporate and Boehringer Ingelheim subsidiary representatives from HR, legal, and sales, said Miller.

The committee oversees the safety program, including accident review.

Other program elements include an online driver training program that last year was incorporated into the company’s overall learning management system. The process is entirely automated, a key advantage, said Miller.

“Fleet doesn’t have to do the manually-intensive tracking and record checking,” she explained.

Recently, the fleet safety program was enhanced with a new component, the Commentary Drive program, said Miller.

“District managers, as part of their job requirements, ride along with sales force and com-
pany drivers to review driver behavior and performance and vehicle condition and maintenance,” said Miller. The review is documented as part of the electronic sales report.

District managers received training, which included a workbook and an in-depth review of driver performance and vehicle maintenance, while attending a sales meeting, Miller added.

The challenge was to communicate the importance of safety training — to convince a sales management concerned with time taken away from the core function of sales, Redalieu said.

However, he said, as a company committed to the health and well-being of its employees, Boehringer Ingelheim’s senior vice president of sales recognized how critically important this training was for his sales team’s commitment to safety.

“He took ownership of the issue and became an advocate for safety, demonstrating the company’s commitment not only with time, but also resources,” said Redalieu.

The Commentary Drive program has led to a significant drop in preventable accidents, according to Redalieu.

Another important factor in promoting a safety culture is clearly defined policies and procedures, leading to accountability, said Miller.

“Clear corporate expectations regarding safety must be constantly refined and communicated,” Miller explained.

“Employees must learn how to incorporate safety behaviors into their day-to-day activities, how to report accidents, and understand what their responsibilities are.”

Importantly, Miller and Redalieu have been given time at national sales meetings to present their message, “precious time at a meeting where the CEO only gets a few minutes on the agenda,” said Redalieu.

“A safety culture must also be characterized by fairness and a consistent approach, applied to everyone, no matter how senior or valuable to sales the person is to the company,” said Miller. “There are no gifts here. Everyone is accountable.”

Still another valuable safety element, Miller believes, is a “strong relationship” with an accident management provider that handles accident services, particularly data and reporting.

The next evolution in Boehringer-Ingelheim’s culture of safety was unveiled recently. “Zero by Choice,” an initiative generated by the board of managing directors, is “a complete culture change, truly a new mentality, an effort to change people’s behavior,” said Redalieu.

Under the program’s tenets, he explained, managers and employees are asked to be responsible for their own well-being and that of others. “Everyone has a role in safety.”

The program represents a move from an environment in which safety is driven by rules and regulations to one in which safety is “truly an instinctive behavior, second-nature throughout the entire corporate organization — management, R&D, sales — with involvement by senior leadership at all levels throughout the company,” Redalieu explained.

The board member who is spearheading the initiative’s inception used the refrain, “Any accident on any given day is one accident too many for Boehringer Ingelheim,” said Miller. “Management is of the belief that there is no such thing as a non-preventable accident.”

Management leadership at global agricultural company Monsanto “is engaged in and owns the vehicle safety issue. This is the critical element in creating a safety culture,” said Lori Waddell, vehicle safety lead and a 20-plus-year company veteran.

Headquartered in St. Louis, the company operates administrative and sales offices, manufacturing plants, seed production facilities, research centers, and learning centers throughout the world. Its global fleet numbers approximately 7,500 vehicles — nearly 3,500 in the U.S. — primarily light-duty trucks, with SUVs, vans, and cars.
Company drivers are mostly involved in sales, but also include agricultural division and production employees who work on farms and research and development staff.

Monsanto’s global vehicle safety policy focuses on what’s expected not only of company drivers, but also any company employee, said Waddell.

Annual Level 1 training, including a computer-based program is provided to “touch all employees with vehicle safety training,” Waddell explained.

In addition, company drivers undergo behind-the-wheel training every three years and annual peer and commentary drives. Managers who conduct the commentary drives complete evaluation paperwork and reporting after the drive to provide a “more natural experience,” Waddell noted. The peer drive is a shortened version performed by peer colleagues.

The global fleet safety policy addresses such actions as seat belt use and drinking and driving prohibitions. However, said Waddell, the policy is customized to local laws and cultural norms worldwide.

Waddell leads the safety program’s global efforts. In each Monsanto business area — commercial, technology and research, production — a lead vehicle safety person and local vehicle safety teams, directed by senior-level managers, manage the program.

The local Monsanto safety leads are “the face of vehicle safety to employees.”

“Key to Monsanto’s vehicle safety policy is the senior management leadership involvement,” said Waddell. “They are responsible and accountable for safety in their business units. Employees see the buy-in by that senior-level leadership and understand its importance as a key corporate value.”

This senior management engagement reflects CEO Hugh Grant’s 2001 leadership role in developing a new vehicle safety program. In announcing the program to Monsanto employees, Grant described their safety as “a key value from our past and key to our future. As we grow and expand around the world, driving is one of the biggest risks we will face.”

Significantly, he pledged his whole-hearted support of the program, confident the company would respond with “world-class solutions” to vehicle safety.

He stated, “I will champion this effort with the rest of the Monsanto Leadership Teams.”

Waddell also “strongly” believes in committing to a safety culture.

“Even in difficult economic times, safety shouldn’t be the first thing that’s cut. It’s not sacrificed for the bottom line,” Waddell said, noting for most companies, the biggest risk occurs on the road.

Benchmarking and “learning best practices from others” are also critical elements in Monsanto’s safety program. Waddell tracks and examines the company’s accident per million miles (APMM) rate monthly to spot trends and determine improvement areas.

“Here again, senior-level leadership and commitment is so important in providing overt support as well as resources and tools to promote safety as a core corporate value in every aspect of the company, not just vehicle safety,” said Waddell.

This safety culture is communicated in several ways. Waddell produces a monthly global electronic newsletter, “Monsanto on the Road.” The newsletter features timely articles, for example, seasonal driving tips, as well as local safety team coverage and off-the-job safety features, such as teen driver training, child safety, etc.

In addition, Waddell publishes a safety-related, “timely story” 3-4 times annually on the company’s Intranet site. One recent story examined motorcycle safety.

Promoting such off-the-job safety reaches employees “in a different way,” through “their minds and hearts,” said Waddell. “Because we care about each other, we want everyone to be safe.” The net effect is a more pervasively felt safety culture.

Employees are encouraged to share vehicle safety training and education beyond the company, Waddell pointed out. “We’re looking into more ways to do that. For example, the e-newsletter can be forwarded by employees to families and friends.”

The company has even shared the computer-based safety training program with customers, Waddell said.

Generally, Monsanto employees and vehicle safety teams have a goal of off-the-job safety education, Waddell noted. Employees are urged to log with the local safety lead near-misses or incidents of any off-the-job accident. Employees who report such incidents are not subject to consequences from the company.

The information, however, is important for Waddell and the safety teams. They track and analyze the data geographically to address new or trending issues, she explained. The information can also help develop new safety policies and safety programs.

“The more I can learn and share about safety,” Waddell said, “the more I can promote safety for everyone.”

**Ecolab Program Supported, Accountable & Communicated**

Key to sustaining a culture of safe driving at St. Paul, Minn.-based Ecolab are senior management support, accountability, and communication, according to Ryan Rebman, director of corporate safety.

The company’s U.S. fleet comprises about 7,300 vehicles, primarily light trucks, vans, and passenger cars with a smaller number of SUVs.

Rebman works with safety leaders in each of the company’s 10 business units that operate in the U.S.

Ecolab’s fleet safety program includes a comprehensive new-hire and motor vehicle report (MVR) program, driver pro-
file management, driver training, and public feedback through a 1-800-number vehicle decal program.

“We live and die by the MVRs,” Rebman said. “They are critical to our approach to driver safety.”

In fact, Ecolab runs 15,000 MVRs a year. “If we don’t know what drivers are doing, we can’t manage their safety. We can’t get them the training and help they need,” Rebman explained.

Reports are run on new-hire candidates and twice annually for all company drivers. In addition, reports are run within 30 days for any driver involved in a preventable accident.

Each new-hire candidate and company driver is defined by four risk levels, based on a 12-point system. The company assigns points according to a citation and its level of seriousness, Rebman explained.

“If you’re a driver with zero points, you’re a Safe Driver,” said Rebman. Risk Level 1 drivers have incurred 1-6 points, and candidates are eligible for hire. At Risk Level 2 (7-11 points) employee candidates must be approved for hire by the relevant business unit’s senior management. Company drivers who reach Level 2 must complete online training and participate in a ride-along with their immediate supervisors.

New-hire candidates whose MVRs indicate a Risk Level 3 (12 points) are not eligible for hire. Company drivers at Level 3 are notified by their business unit’s safety and HR team that further incidents may result in loss of driver privileges and possible termination.

In addition to a manager ride-along, Risk Level 3 drivers must participate in an eight-hour training class. Conducted by Advanced Driver Training Services, the course includes four hours of driver training and four hours of in-vehicle skills testing.

“We want to teach drivers better habits while they drive,” said Rebman. These classes, held three times per year at six locations throughout the U.S., represent a sizable investment in the company’s safety program, said Rebman. Any newly promoted manager must also attend.

“There’s the expense of the classes and bringing people; many must be flown to the site. Most company drivers are field personnel, so bringing them to classes means they’re out of the field for a day or so,” he explained.

The company is now refining an in-vehicle training course for newly hired employees.

“We feel that associates need to be familiar with the type of vehicles they drive. Unfamiliarity with the vehicles can lead to incidents, especially in parking lots,” said Rebman.

Once initial training and safety policy orientation are completed, a profile on each driver is created. According to Rebman, the profile contains three components and individual point scores based on:

- Violation events.
- Loss events (preventable accidents as defined by the National Safety Council.)
- Public feedback events, verified complaints or compliments based on the “How’s My Driving” 1-800-number program.

The automated and online driver profiles are managed by Ecolab’s accident management provider, the CEI Group, Inc.

Ecolab also maintains a self-reporting policy, said Rebman. “We are getting better at holding drivers accountable to self-report,” he added.

Company drivers must report any engagement with law enforcement. Once a self-report is entered into the system, an MVR is run 45 days later. Failure to self-report can result in consequences “up to and including termination,” Rebman noted.

The points and assigned risk levels are maintained for a rolling 24-month period.

Accountability is a key aspect of Ecolab’s pro-safety approach. The underlying goal is not punitive, however. “We invest a lot of time and money in employees and want them to succeed for the company and themselves. There are consequences to some behaviors, but we’d like to focus on changing driver behavior rather than simply the punitive aspects of safety policy,” Rebman explained.

Important safety program information, including twice-yearly MVR reminders,
is communicated to drivers by business unit safety leaders and division management, indicating its importance to the company, according to Rebman.

“Many things happen at the unit level to support safety. The business unit safety leaders and management put a lot of work into it,” said Rebman. The company has developed a Driver Safety Handbook that discusses policies, procedures, and expectations of a driver for Ecolab.

“This handbook helps make the rules of the road crystal-clear for Ecolab drivers,” said Rebman. The handbook is another element in driver safety accountability. The company is also exploring electronic means to enforce its distracted driving policy. Texting and using other electronics (e.g., laptop computers, MP3 players, etc.) while driving is prohibited. Drivers are encouraged to pull over when making or receiving a call.

Rebman said the company wants to understand “how big the problem of cell phoning and other distracted driving behavior is.”

Some electronic devices now available on the market may provide the tracking data to determine a realistic perspective of the extent of distracted behaviors among company drivers.

To Rebman, Ecolab’s senior management support means they understand the value of creating a safe driving culture. “People are not hurt when they follow our safety processes. They’re able to work, service customers, and go home at the end of the day to their families. That’s what we’re really trying to make happen when we talk about driver safety,” Rebman said.

From 2003 to 2008, Ecolab’s comprehensive driver safety program cut the company’s rate of preventable accidents per million miles by 15 percent. Ecolab is a global leader in cleaning, sanitizing, food safety, and infection prevention products and services. Of 26,000 company employees, more than 14,000 Ecolab sales and service personnel serve customers in more than 160 countries across the globe.

**JOHNSON & JOHNSON PROMOTES SAFETY AS ‘WAY OF DOING BUSINESS’**

Global healthcare company, Johnson & Johnson is a recognized leader in creating a culture of safety for its 119,000 employees at more than 250 Johnson & Johnson companies throughout the world.

Recognizing that the more than 35,000 Johnson & Johnson employees worldwide who drive a vehicle on company business represent “the highest activity that our sales forces are engaged in,” the company’s global SAFE Fleet program was designed to reduce this risk and keep drivers and communities safe, according to a company case study.

The SAFE Fleet program involves active senior management across the company, including high-level executives in each Johnson & Johnson operating region who serve as program champions. They promote the SAFE Fleet message, “as a way of doing business” to employees, the study reports.

Field managers conduct annual commentary drives with their direct-reports and document, review, and investigate all accidents. Managers also ensure safety topics are addressed at sales and other meetings.

Driver training covers four groups: new hires, experienced and high-risk drivers, and spouses/partners. Training activities include home study, on-the-road driver courses every three years, and meeting-based education.

Safety is part of every company driver’s performance review. Good driving habits are incentivized with cash bonuses and car upgrades. Preventable accidents could result in such “disincentives” as paying out-of-pocket insurance deductibles.

SAFE Fleet teams in each Johnson & Johnson operating company or country in which it maintains a presence support all aspects of policy implementation. Members also provide the information required for team assessments, performed every three years with an online assessment tool.

This tool — the Assessment Tool of Leadership Actions for SAFE Fleet (ATLAS) is “key to driving a safety culture,” said Sandra Lee, director, Johnson & Johnson worldwide fleet safety.

Focusing on behaviors that create and sustain a fleet safety culture at all organizational levels, ATLAS is designed to identify and mitigate fleet safety risks as early as possible. The three-phase ATLAS process includes:

- **Self-Assessment.** Each fleet safety team conducts an annual online self-evaluation, generating a self-assessment scorecard.

- **Management Action Plan (MAP).** The MAP addresses all issues identified in the self-assessment, detailing actions, staff responsible for implementation, and target dates. The MAP and score card are updated as actions are implemented.

- **SAFE Fleet Assessment.** Through on-site visits, the SAFE Fleet Assessment Team performs an independent review of each safety team every three years.

SAFE Fleet teams are evaluated on five key elements: executive management, field management, core systems, support systems, and results. Scores of “silver,” “gold,” or “platinum” in each element are rolled into a final score.

Using critical industry performance measures — APMM, injuries per million miles driven, and percent of vehicles involved in accidents — Johnson & Johnson safety staff benchmark the company’s fleet safety record regularly. An in-house online reporting system captures global data each quarter.

According to the Johnson & Johnson case study, since its inception in 1995 through 2008, the SAFE Fleet program reduced the company’s global APMM rate by 37 percent, despite a fleet size increase of more than 157 percent during the same time period.