

## Let's Talk Fleet Risk - Episode 8

### Could you save £56K with a road safety framework?

#### Dave Conway, FM Conway

**Simon:** Welcome to Let's Talk Fleet Risk - a podcast for those who manage drivers and their vehicles and want to reduce road risk in their organisation.

Hello and welcome to the March edition of Let's Talk Fleet Risk.

With me today is Dave Conway who is the Integrated Management systems and road safety manager for FM Conway.

Hi Dave and welcome to the podcast

**Dave:** Hi Simon

**Simon:** That's quite a mouthful for a job title – can you explain more about what that role entails and how you got into road safety for FM Conway.

**Dave:** My role is to look after the business management systems of the company – I was looking after quality and environmental systems and somewhere along the way road safety systems came along as a certifiable framework standard.

I got involved and I became beyond passionate about it – it's now a large part of my job and we changed my job title to reflect that.

**Simon:** So you're not a fleet manager or driver manager – you're all about setting up the systems and processes that manage that road risk.

**Dave:** Exactly that – and I'm a great believer in systemic solutions to most problems and safe system is the key particularly with road safety. That's really where I come from. It does mean I actually have the advantage of being independent of transport and logistical operations which enables me to take a better view on how they are doing things and come at a problem with a different viewpoint without having to worry about normal business considerations.

**Simon:** Just give us an idea of the size of the fleet that Conway operates – and what sort of vehicles they are

**Dave:** These days I think our fleet – and it's changed a lot over the past 2 years – is around 1100 vehicles, ranging from an HGV fleet of about 400 vehicles and those HGVs could be a low loader, an articulated loader or an articulated tanker vehicle right down to 4 wheeler and 6 wheeler tippers. We then have a fleet of about 550 vans and about 80 company cars or grey fleet – and by grey fleet I'm talking about cars that are privately owned but funded by

the business to do mileage on behalf of work. So that's the breakdown. It's a little bit of everything. If it hasn't got wings, we tend to drive it.

**Simon:** Because that's such a mixed fleet, I guess there's a number of different people within the organisation, the people who all have an impact on road safety – fleet managers, driver managers, operations managers, transport managers for the HGVs etc. How do you work with the fact that responsibility gets shared across so many job roles – how do you ensure that everyone understands what's their responsibility is?

**Dave:** The whole point of the systems, the management systems is so that everyone can follow process and procedure, regardless of whether they are running a couple of lorries or running a patch up operation on a street somewhere in town, or whether they're running bulkers around the M25 delivering aggregates or bitumen. If everyone is working to the same management system, we can ensure consistency in terms of our output and we can ensure everyone is following the same safety standards and doing the best we can – that's the approach.

**Simon:** Was that challenging – to get everyone pulling in the same direction?

**Dave:** It's not so much challenging to get them pulling – no-one gets up in the morning wanting to kill people on the roads or anywhere else. However, they have different priorities – they want to get their job done. They want to be as efficient as possible with their work and so on. So, the challenge is understanding their other priorities whilst getting them to follow road safety management systems. I think as long as you can be empathetic to their other issues you can deal with it – at the end of the day the best system is one that everybody wants to follow. If it's easy to follow they will follow it so it has to be a system that is easy to follow and works for everybody.

**Simon:** And is that something you asked for feedback on when you were designing these systems? How important is it to get feedback from others in the company when you build these processes?

**Dave:** It's imperative. You'll have a framework for your standards, and you'll know what has to be in there but when you're going to work out how you're going to do it the people who are expert in doing it – or perhaps in not doing it – are those people on the ground. It doesn't matter if it's a quality system or an environmental system you have to speak to the people doing the work and say "this is what we're trying to do – how would you do it?" Then you can come to a consensus and find the best useable methodologies and put them in place – there's no point in putting in place something that is not going to happen anyway.

If it needs to be policed, it's not working. If it's the right way to do it, they are going to do it because it makes sense without policing.

**Simon:** So, did you get driver input into those systems as well?

**Dave:** Essentially, throughout. When we started establishing our 39001 system, we set up a working group and to this day it's in place – we have people from the board, from management and drivers – drivers and supervisors – and they all sit on this committee to make sure all of their thoughts are allowed for.

**Simon:** So, you mentioned ISO39001 and I know you're a big advocate for that. Why did you choose that as standard that Conway was going to embed in the business?

**Dave:** ISO390001 is a management system framework standard for road traffic safety. It's been our experience and indeed the world's experience that certified management systems work. They make a difference, there are demonstrable benefits for everybody and very few downsides.

How we got into it – it's an interesting story. We received a letter back in 2012, Transport for London were one of our key customers and we received a letter from Sir Peter Hendy CBE who was the commissioner for Transport for London. He had commissioned a piece of research by the Transport Research Laboratory into why cycle crashes in London seemed to be dominated by construction industry vehicles. He sent us this 700-page report and it came up with a number of recommendations – and we were asked to support the recommendations. One of those was adopting a formal framework management system for your transport operations such as ISO 39001 and that was the point we embraced it.

I hadn't heard of it – so I went and bought the book, and we did it – not realising that we would be the first. I'd spent most of my working life railing against some aspects of health and safety saying 'why were we so worried about some aspects at work when you were more likely to die driving for work or driving to and from work?' and all of a sudden here was a system that was supporting everything that I was saying and I embraced it with a passion – and here I am still doing that.

**Simon:** You were one of the first business to get ISO39001 accreditation and you did it 2012 – obviously you've had that in the business for close to 10 years now – so what has been the benefits to FM Conway that you can categorically say – that's because we had that management system in place

**Dave:** I am always mindful of the fact that if you are going to persuade a business to adopt these systems there needs to be a business case. I really can't overstate the business case. Within the first year of adopting the system, we found ourselves with a £56,000 reduction in our fleet insurance premium. That sum of money paid the certification for 39001 for the next 7 years. There's your business case – if you're running a system like that you will have less accidents. You will have less crashes, less injuries, less costs on maintenance, you'll find that your drivers drive better and if they drive better there's less wear and tear and less fuel usage. From a business point of view – absolutely amazing it will make money – simple as that. It will not cost you money.

There are a lot of road safety systems out there and I'm not going to quote other systems, but I can tell you from experience they will cost a small fortune. I speak to a lot of people in business, and they say we don't have enough budget as we are a member of this other scheme and it costs us so much we can't afford training let alone anything else.

39001 will not cost you money. Yes, there will be some costs, but I promise you you'll get every penny back through business improvements and that's the fundamental reason for having a system like that.

**Simon:** What types of vehicles you run and the number you've got – it's a sizeable mixed fleet. What are the challenges in running that fleet that you think your management standards help with. If you're not running a management standard like that what are the sorts of issues a business is going to come up against and find it difficult to manage?

**Dave:** With this system our biggest challenge is the drivers don't consider themselves drivers. We have a large number of HGV drivers that we call professional drivers – these are

the guys if you meet them for a drink, meet them in the street, they say 'I am a driver'. They take a pride in that profession – 'I'm a good driver – and I haven't had a crash for 33 years', they take a pride in that. What you also have is a large number of drivers who think of themselves as bricklayers, or asphalters or ground workers, who actually have a vehicle and they drive to and from work every day and at work. They may be moving themselves, their colleagues, some machines or some tools or some materials – but you ask them what they do for a living and they don't even think about driving. They'll take pride in their work, but they will forget about being a driver and the challenge for us is to make those guys appreciate that driving is an important part of their work and the job and they should take as much pride in being crash-free as their professional driver colleagues.

That's the challenge – it's one we are still working on and we are still striving to get – and we are getting better by having a management system in place as it enables them to see the successes of the professional drivers and it gives them something to embrace and be involved in as well because when you get the certification you can take the pride, and we all get it, even the pedestrians.

**Simon:** What have you done within the business to try and encourage that culture of professionalism among the van drivers? How do you get them to view themselves and their driving as a professional element of their role?

**Dave:** I think primarily it is through our certification that we can spread that pride. Internally we have some pretty good marketing approaches, we have good communication channels and every time we do something in respect of road safety we publish it.

We win awards we get prizes and so on, and we boast about them to try and encourage that sense of pride among all employees. We also have a few processes in place – stick and carrot – stick processes to maintain the standards but we much prefer using the carrot approach – we take some pride in this and I like to think that FM Conway are internationally recognised these days for the standards we set with road safety. I've had people come to us from South Africa to see how we do it, from Australia, New Zealand and that's not bad going for a small private family owned business.

**Simon:** How do you recognise drivers – the carrot bit?

**Dave:** Professional drivers - it's quite easy, we actually have a scheme we introduced several years ago. We call it the Gold Hat. When a driver reaches a certain standard, having gone so many hours without any incidents, vehicle has to be clean, they need recommendations from whoever they deliver to, they have to do a certain amount of training and they work up from a bronze to a silver to a gold hat – they get given an actual helmet in that colour which they can wear in pride when they arrive on site.

Of course, you turn up and get out of your lorry with a gold helmet and everyone takes the mickey until you respectfully remind them there is a very significant salary increase. This salary increase is self-funding – that's the nice thing about it. We pay them more money and the scheme is self-funding because we are saving this money by not having the incidents, by having the better miles per gallon and so on. Like all good initiatives they fund themselves.

**Simon:** It sounds funny and worth making a joke about but actually the ones who haven't got the gold hat want the gold hat.

**Dave:** Exactly as I say it gives the guys something to take some pride in

**Simon:** I think that's a key lesson for anyone trying to improve a driver culture. Better to encourage them with a carrot approach than using a stick all the time.

**Dave:** Totally, if you nag and poke and prod all the time, people just turn off and get worse. We found certainly with the [professional drivers, that encouragement, reward and respect make the difference. It is much harder to do with van drivers and we have to focus a bit more on the stick, but we try to do it in a positive way and one of the things we've introduced is the Samsara System. It's a live link with a telematics system that has cameras in and outward facing, there some artificial intelligence involved with the cameras so if the camera detects you are using your phone or you haven't got your seatbelt on it sends an immediate alert to the line manager literally instantly – who can then yell through the system back to the driver "Put your seatbelt on!"

We don't want that to be a stick, but we know the drivers know that they are being watched. Unfortunately, there will be a few people who don't like that but those are probably the people that are of most concern.

**Simon:** That leads me nicely onto data – you need data to run a driver recognition scheme to know if they're improving or need interventions. You've plainly got a lot of data coming from your systems. How do you manage that?

**Dave;** Monitoring and measuring is a fundamental requirement of any management system and we are required to do it for road safety in a positive way. So we are trying to find the good in things. We do have data logging over speeding events, harsh braking events, the system keeps track on it. We try to keep positive about it. We use it as an opportunity to talk to the drivers about their issues.

We've got initiatives we've introduced. Our E training system – e learning for drivers - and everybody who drives for us must undertake an online driver risk profiling exercise. It's based loosely on the advanced driving test. Everyone who drives for the company, company, or grey fleet, we all have to do this driver risk profiling. It takes about 20 minutes, and it identifies those areas where you are more at risk than others.

You can come through with a set of green lights, or it might identify that you have a weakness in hazard perception or a weakness in your technical knowledge and as a result of identifying that, the system will then assign you online e-modules to undertake. So, from there we can actually focus the training on the driver's shortcomings, and we then do a short test to check they have met the standards.

They have to repeat if they haven't. All our drivers do that every year, so we are able to track that they are doing it and getting the training and we are also able to track their scores year on year are better. That's the most important thing. What we are looking to do as this Samsara System takes off – and this is a wish at the moment – is identifying those people who have ongoing speeding issues. We all do it, I've been there, and I can remember doing a speed awareness course, and having done that I think it's fair to say it was 8 or 9 months before I had a speeding situation again, and the courses are great but they wear off. Eventually the urgency of the situation becomes stronger in your mind than your memory of that course, and what we are trying to do at the moment is establish who the common speeders are and develop either e-training or virtual reality training modules that are equivalent to a speed awareness course and put our drivers on that so that we can tackle them before they have to go through legal process. It's just trying to be a step ahead of the game. We are working on that at the moment.

**Simon:** With the driver profiling or risk assessment what's been the driver response?

**Dave:** The way of the world is that all people understand they have to do occasional mandatory training. Without mentioning other systems out there, we are all aware of the most commonly used fleet management service and that has e-learning within it and drivers are required to do 2 modules a year. We found the drivers are doing the same 2 every year because they knew all the answers and could whizz through it in 2 minutes! – to be fair there's always resistance to having to do a bit of training but people who have done the training come away from it and say – 'actually that's pretty good and I learned something there.' That's why you did that training because the system had determined that you didn't know it and that's why we'd given it to you. There are positives, there's no more resistance to that method of e-training than any other e-training they'd ever have to do.

**Simon:** You talked about your professional driver recognition scheme – what other interventions or initiatives have you got or are working on to improve driver safety?

**Dave:** The big one at the moment alongside the Samsara system is for the professional fleet – the big trucks – we've had sensors on the vehicle to detect objects on the near side and far side, the blind spots and so on and we've had sensors fitted for some time, and what we found, certainly through an urban environment there were so many objects setting these sensors off it was not unknown for drivers to disable the system. Now I have to make it clear if we ever caught a driver disabling it we would have to have a serious word.

We know and understand this was happening because you could drive down a crowded high street and this bleeper would go off every 3 seconds so what we did – we worked hand in hand with a company called Brigade and they had a couple of our trucks and they installed computer servers in the passenger seats to gather data. They have now developed with us and are selling a system we are putting on all our trucks which is intelligent sensing. They will look at any object that is moving within the vicinity of the truck and extrapolate the route that object is going and the route we are going and if they detect a potential collision it will slam the vehicle's brakes on. That's going to make an enormous difference. We think that's incredible technology and we're very proud to be involved with it.

**Simon:** That sounds like a really good initiative. One of the problems with some technology is it can false alarm or trigger a number of times when it's not necessary and that damages the driver's trust in the system. Potentially encourages them to turn it off. For you to develop a more intelligent system means it's always on and there when it's needed

**Dave:** Exactly – we're very proud of that. We've developed auto stop – using it on site rather than on the highway currently but for example our sweepers are all fitted with auto-stops so if an object walks behind a reversing sweeper, it will slam the brakes on, if someone moves at the back of that loading shovel the brakes are slammed on. We're looking at how you can operate it sensibly and safely on road transport – you have to be very, very careful, you can't just have it slamming the brakes on a truck every 10 secs – but it's another initiative that has a lot of mileage in it.

**Simon:** We talked briefly about the massive insurance reduction that you had and that's a key element in the business case for doing this, but are there any other key benefits you've seen as a business?

**Dave:** The most significant is just the sheer reduction in crashes and injuries. We monitored it – it's one of our regular things we have to measure as part of 39001 system – and there's no doubt that since we introduced the system the number of incidents plummeted and the number of incidents involving injury plummeted. That's the key factor. We had a 2 year plateau at one point where we identified we had stopped improving and we looked long and hard as to why that was. We found the solutions and implemented them and continued the downward trend. In those specs that's the big benefit. If you're drivers are driving safely, if they have a sense of pride that they are driving safely, then you'll find you get the benefits in terms of costs of maintenance of that fleet as well. Our maintenance costs actually went down even though we were doing more of it. It sounds paradoxical. Because we became systemic and more controlled in our maintenance approach we found that each time it went in for maintenance there was less work to do than if you did it on an ad hoc basis.

**Simon:** That makes a huge difference at the end of the vehicle's life as well – life maintenance costs are much lower...

**Dave:** There has to be a business case. We all take safety very, very seriously but at the end of the day if you run a business that is extremely safe, healthy but losing money the business won't survive. There must be a sound business case for it.

**Simon:** You've got a case study on our driving for better business website which outlines that as well and the business benefits so I'll put that in the show notes. The final point I wanted to talk about was FM Conway's headquartered in Kent and a lot of your work is done in Kent. You take road safety seriously as the whole company. How important is the reputation for a business like yours within your local area of being a responsible transport operator.

**Dave:** We see ourselves as part of Kent. A very large number of our employees are residents and rate payers of Kent and we feel like we're really involved with Kent. With corporate social responsibility and requirements, we try and support the local economy. We give work to local businesses where we can, we buy from local suppliers, and at the same time, we want to look after our colleagues, friends and our neighbours in our own county. I'm a Kent rate payer. I live in Maidstone, and I have a family and I want to know my family can go out on the roads of Kent and come home safely each day. So, it's important to me, to all of us – Kent's our home and we're proud to be part of it.

**Simon:** Reputation is something that should concern any business especially a business like yours where you have the name plastered down the side of your vehicles - it makes a huge difference. It doesn't take much for that reputation to be tarnished, does it?

**Dave:** Exactly – I had a meeting in the office the other day and we were talking about exactly that – and as I said earlier I’m very proud of the reputation Conway’s have got in terms of road traffic safety - we are internationally known for it. That puts us on a pedestal and that means we have to work that little bit harder and I’m proud to do that – it gives us the motivation and incentive.

**Simon;** That’s really excellent and I can see that’s paid dividends for you throughout the business. It does focus everybody’s mind. Dave, that’s been a fascinating conversation Thanks very much.

If anyone would like to quiz you or hear a little bit more you’re going to be on a panel discussion we are running at the Health and Safety Event in Birmingham at the NEC from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April. The panel discussion is ‘Good practice in driver safety management’ and it starts at 10.20am on the 7<sup>th</sup> April so if anyone would like to come along and hear you and a number of other driver safety managers talk about the good practice they do and how they meet the challenges I think you’ll find it a worthwhile discussion to attend. It’s in the DfBB Driver Safety Zone and there’s a link in the show notes.

Dave, thanks you very much for your time. It’s been fascinating and we really appreciate you taking the time.

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**Simon:** If you manage drivers and their vehicles, and you face similar issues to those discussed in this podcast, there are links in the show notes to some useful resources on the Driving for Better Business website. And these are all free to access. If you enjoyed the conversation, please don’t forget to hit subscribe - so you know when the next episode is released. And please also give us a 5-star review, as this helps us to get up the podcast rankings, and makes it more visible to others who might also find it useful. You can follow us – that’s Driving for Better Business on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. And most importantly, please help us to spread the word. All our resources are free for those who manage fleets and their employees who drive for work. Thank you for listening to Let’s Talk Fleet Risk, and I look forward to welcoming you to the next episode.