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Mr. Bolger

*Insurance*  
**From Valet to Shuttle: How Better Hiring and Training Can Prevent Losses**

By [Christopher Bolger](#), Senior Risk Manager, Venture Insurance Programs

Over the course of several decades, the workplace has become safer, thanks in part to safety and risk management initiatives. The same is true of driving, which has become safer due to air bags, public safety campaigns and several other important factors. But when employees of hotels and other businesses take to the roads in the course of their work, they are still at

risk.

In fact, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, transportation incidents are the leading cause of occupational deaths <http://www.bls.gov/> across all industries (including hospitality) and a major source of costly insurance claims. Hotels can mitigate this risk through better hiring practices and training for valet attendants and shuttle drivers.

**The Risks of Driving on the Job**

Motor vehicle accidents are extremely costly in economic terms. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the total economic cost of motor vehicle crashes was \$250 billion in 2005; this figure includes lost productivity. In addition, the most costly workers' compensation injury claims result from motor vehicle incidents, says the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) <https://www.ncci.com/nccimain/pages/default.aspx>.

These costs impact the hospitality industry, which has unique risks and exposures inherent to valet and shuttle services. Both carry exposures for workers' compensation and automotive liability for physical damage. Shuttles also have exposure for personal injury liability for guests traveling in the van, while valet insurance must take into account that these employees have vehicles in their "care, custody and control" until they return them to customers.



When accidents do happen, they are the fault of poor driving behavior 90 percent of the time. According to NCCI, driving behaviors like speeding and distracted driving are major contributors to accidents resulting in workers' compensation claims. These facts highlight the need to hire and train drivers for better on-the-road behaviors to reduce such risks.

**Hiring Better Drivers**

Instituting and adhering to rigorous hiring procedures is the first step in improved valet and shuttle driver safety. This process involves a few

major steps, but the first one is as easy as talking to current employees. Evaluate if any of your current staff members is a good fit for a driving position, and consider moving him or her between valet and shuttle when appropriate. It may cost your hotel less time and money to hire someone from within, as training will be easier since you already have a history with the employee.

To evaluate any applicant for a valet or shuttle position, remember that past driving experience is the best indicator of future performance. Consider the following factors:

**Licensing** - Require applicants to provide a valid driver's license for their state of residence, and make a copy. If the position requires specialized licensing, ensure all applicants already have the appropriate license and qualifications.

**Driving History** - Through the application, gather from candidates a detailed driving history, including the types of vehicles they have driven professionally. Self-reported histories can only reveal so much, though. By far the most important part of the driver hiring process is reviewing the applicant's Motor Vehicle Record (MVR). Though the MVR may not list every single accident or risky driving incident, it will give you a good sense of the candidate's approach to driving and orientation to safety. As an employer, you can set your own standards for what is acceptable on an MVR.

Here are Good Questions to Ask When Examining a Candidate's MVR:

- How many violations does the candidate have on his or her record? This is more useful information than the number of points assigned by the state's DMV.
- How many moving violations or at-fault accidents has the candidate had in the past seven years?
- Has the candidate had any major convictions, such as a DUI, in the past seven years?
- Has the candidate had his or her license suspended in the past seven years?

**In-person Interview** - When you meet with a candidate in person, you should discuss the MVR and any red flags you have identified, as well as employment and driving history. You can also use this as an opportunity to assess communication skills, reasons for gaps in employment history and if the candidate's personality makes him or her well suited to be a shuttle driver or valet. Particularly for valets, you want someone who is friendly, as him or her are the first and last hotel representative to interact with the customer. Also, this person should have an awareness of difficult situations that may arise and know how to properly address them.

**Criminal and Work History** - Use a reputable third-party provider to conduct a background

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**SEPTEMBER: Hotel Group Meetings for 2015**



**Meeting Planners and Hotels: The Shifting Playing Field**

By [Lynn McCullough](#), Director of Meetings and Association Management, CMA Association Management

Broadway composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim summed up the key to a successful marriage in the musical Company by noting in the song 'Perfect Relationships' that "it's the little things." So too with the partnership between a meeting planner and a hotel—it's the little things that add up to a booking, a successful meeting and the potential for repeat business. CMA Association Management (CMA) has provided comprehensive association management services to national and global professional and trade associations for over 25 years. In that role, we have staged hundreds of meetings, conferences and trade shows, most of which have been at hotels across the country and the world. [READ MORE](#)



**Conference Centers: A Renewed Perspective**

By [Mark Cooper](#), Chief Executive Officer, International Association of Conference Centers

Gathering places for people to meet and hold events have been around since mankind began and there have been many fascinating meeting venues which have been built over the centuries where historically significant decisions have been made to shape the world we live in today! Back in 1981, a group of hoteliers recognized the need to provide a serious concentration on the productive meeting environment and founded the International Association of Conference Centres. In the years since the term "conference centre" was coined, and for IACC, it represents a total commitment to the concept. [READ MORE](#)



**When the Going Gets Tough, The Tough Start Selling**

By [Brenda Fields](#), Founder, Fields & Company

It is unquestionable that we are faced with strong economic conditions, especially in the United States, which have had a dramatic impact on the lodging industry. For the past five years, all success indicators (occupancy, average rate, and RevPAR) have climbed steadily and most owners have enjoyed record profits. In New York City alone, demand for the first six months of 2014 increased by 6.6%, breaking all records, per Smith Travel Research (STR). [READ MORE](#)



**The Case for Personalized Attention in Hotels**

By [Claire Harrington](#), Public Relations Manager, Social Tables

What does your hotel's customer ecosystem look like? Impactful first impressions, personalized service and pleasant surprises sound like terms ripped right off of a customer service checklist: is your hotel employing them? Are you leveraging your employees to build meaningful relationships with your guests? Do you consider the idea of community engagement a necessity to success? Learn why personalized attention in hotels is reshaping the way we offer guest service, and how your team can create advocates for your brand through something as simple as understanding what your guest really wants. Hint, it's not a fancy lobby. [READ MORE](#)

and employment history check. Your insurance provider may offer this service or refer you to a company they trust. You will also need to call references—don't be tempted to just email them—and take a look at candidates' public social media profiles. Though that may sound intrusive, it is a common and accepted part of the hiring process these days. Drug testing is another now-commonplace part of the hiring process. Send all candidates to the same trusted medical professionals for testing. Make sure to have the policy and procedure for hiring documented and followed.

**Skills, Knowledge and Functional capacity** - The extent of these tests depends on the state and labor laws. Start with a written test to assess general driving knowledge, and make sure the candidate understands the rules of the road. A road test is especially useful for determining if the candidate is well suited to the valet or shuttle driver position. Though you cannot collect medical information about candidates, you can have them undertake a functional capacity evaluation. For example, shuttle drivers who do airport runs need to be able to lift as much as 80 pounds several times a day to handle guests' luggage. This can help eliminate anyone unable to perform the physical tasks required and can reduce the potential for workers' compensation claims.

**Training, Coaching and Mentorship for Drivers**

According to NCCI, employers can play a huge role in encouraging driver safety and discouraging distracted driving. All new drivers should undergo an orientation to your hotel, fleet of vehicles and facilities, as well as safety training specific to their role as a valet or shuttle driver. All drivers must be trained in safe and defensive driving tactics, and this training should review cell phone use and other causes of distracted driving.

Shuttle driver training should cover operation and basic maintenance of the van, as well as emergency procedures and how to respond in the event of an accident. Introduce drivers to your daily vehicle safety procedure or checklist.

Since shuttle drivers spend a long time behind the wheel and handle guests' luggage, they should also be trained in ergonomics and body mechanics. Proper body mechanics for getting in and out of the vehicle, as well as lifting and handling luggage is crucial to reducing injuries.

Valets require different training to meet the unique demands of their jobs. They need to know the layout of your parking facility and be equipped with exact directions for entering and exiting. You should also review what some may consider common sense dos and don'ts of parking a guest's car, like not rifling through items in the center console.

Not all hotels do this, but consider training valets to conduct a visual inspection before accepting keys from a guest. They can use two-part tickets (one part for the vehicle owner, the other for the hotel) to make note of dents and scratches, which they can review with the guest. This can help cut down on fraudulent claims for physical damage.

Valet training should also include conflict resolution, as many aspects of the job require them to de-escalate situations. In the event of damage, valets should be trained to be up-front with guests and their managers. They should also know how to avoid confrontation with belligerent or intoxicated guests. All of this can reduce the frequency and severity of any claims.

Like shuttle drivers, valets should be taught ergonomics and body mechanics. They get in and out of cars dozens of times a day; being taught to do this with proper body mechanics can mean the difference between a productive valet and a workers' compensation claim.

In addition to formal training, have new shuttle drivers and valets shadow experienced co-workers. This allows drivers and valets to share and pass on difficult-to-document insider knowledge, like how to navigate particularly tight areas of your parking garage.

**Drivers Must Never Stop Learning**

To consistently control claims, training and coaching must be consistent parts of valets' and drivers' jobs. If there are multiple accidents with specific drivers, you need to look at their driving trends, evaluate their ability to drive and consider requiring them to take refresher courses. You can review drivers' MVRs at least once a year to stave off potential problems before they begin manifesting at work.

In addition, I recommend the following for ongoing coaching and training:

- Ride-alongs with newer drivers to evaluate their driving behavior and skills as they adjust to the job.
- Mandatory, monthly safety meetings geared towards valet and shuttle drivers.
- Fitness instruction in back exercises and stretches to support proper body mechanics.
- A written procedure for incidents included in the human resources manual. This should include job coaching by a manager when there are incidents, as well as a documentation process that will provide for justification in the event of employee separation.

Driving is a dangerous activity, but your hotel can take steps to make it safer for valets and shuttle drivers. In addition to the recommendations laid out above, you can talk to your insurance broker about risk management tips and your lawyer about relevant labor laws. But be sure to take action today—don't wait for a serious accident to make a change to your driver hiring and training.

Senior Risk Manager for Venture Insurance Programs. Mr. Bolger has specialized in hospitality risk management since 2007 and is responsible for improving the risk performance of Venture's hospitality clients by reducing the frequency and severity of claims, analyzing loss reports to identify trends by industry or location, and improving loss ratios in order to improve pricing for the hotel and profitability for the insurer. Overseeing all risk management operations, including the claims adjusting teams, Mr. Bolger ensures proper proactive claim management and loss control procedures are in place with the overall goal of minimizing the overall cost of risk. Mr. Bolger can be contacted at 800-282-6247 ext. 242 or [Cbolger@ventureprograms.com](mailto:Cbolger@ventureprograms.com) [Extended Bio..](#)

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