

The Penhall Company

C a s e S t u d y

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*Gary Johnson
Corporate Safety Director*



The Company

As the nation's largest specialty contractor in concrete cutting and demolition, the Penhall Company has the experience to handle any project of any size. From drilling holes for plumbers and electricians, to clean-room modifications, to bridge demolition, the Penhall Company sets the industry standard for quality and value.

With 38 divisions in 17 states, Penhall Company is responsible for approximately 1200 drivers and their vehicles. The company places a premium on safety for its workers and the community. Workers routinely attend safety training sessions, and full-time safety supervisors ensure the company meets its high standards on every job.

The Problem

Penhall workers travel to several job sites each day, driving in mostly highly populated metropolitan areas. Because Penhall Company has so many workers on the roads, the company has the potential for a high frequency of collisions. Compounding this, workers drive box trucks with a 15,000 lb. gross vehicle weight that do not require a commercial driver's license. Therefore, they come to Penhall Company with no special driver training.

“Our workers drive their personal vehicles to the office, then pick up the truck and use it for the day,” said

Gary Johnson, Corporate Safety Director for Penhall Company. “Things like stopping distance, acceleration, and visibility are all very different in a box truck with heavy equipment on board than in their family vehicle. We wanted to provide them with specialized training to improve their safety on the road.”

Penhall Company investigated various training options before selecting the Smith System Driver Improvement Institute. The company found that many provided interactive, classroom and videos training options, but only Smith System emphasized hands-on, on the road training.

“I was at a fast food restaurant and saw a Federal Express driver expertly back into a parking space,” continued Johnson. “The driver said he used the Smith System. I contacted Smith System and talked to other customers who had very positive results from the program.”

The Solution

Penhall Company decided to provide all of its drivers with training from the Smith System Driver Improvement Institute. Founded in 1952, Smith

System is the nation's first fleet driver safety training organization with on-road, hands-on safety education techniques for experienced drivers.

The Smith System program teaches eye-mind coordination to prevent collisions before they happen. The concepts help drivers to see, think, and act their way through a multitude of driving environments. Smith System emphasizes its on-road and hands-on training as the foundation of its programs. This real world training is supplemented with the company's extensive video and DVD library, web-based education and SmithSAFE fleet monitoring program.

Total awareness, perceptive anticipation, accurate forecasting, early detection, and deliberate reaction are the primary features of these proven techniques. By emphasizing greater visibility and more space surrounding the vehicle, it gives the driver more time to react to driving challenges. The Smith System encapsulates these concepts in its trademarked Five Keys to Space Cushion Driving.

Penhall Company initiated the program by having Smith System instructors teach drivers in four hour sessions. These sessions included one hour of classroom training and three hours of on the road instruction. Each class had only three students to ensure that each received hands-on, individualized training.

The company trained all 1200 drivers in just four months. At the same time, one person from each region received the training to become a Smith System certified instructor. These regional trainers could then train any new drivers and also provide refresher training.

The Results

In the first year using the Smith System, the company had a 25 percent reduction in the frequency of collisions. In addition, the company saw an 18 percent reduction in the severity of collisions that resulted in a savings of \$142,000. Although driving is not their primary job, Penhall drivers responded well to the training and continue to use the skills learned to change driving habits and further reduce collisions.

Each division has a monthly safety meeting where they review the Smith System principles. The company also uses Smith System videos and other interactive tools to reinforce the skills learned.

“I have good strong evidence that the Smith System 5 Keys work to prevent accidents,” said Johnson. “Workers have told me how they have been able to avoid accidents by using the Smith System principles, such as not following too close or stopping a car length from the car in front of them. Smith System training, along with ongoing positive reinforcement, has proven to be an extremely effective method of reducing accidents and improving safety.”

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