

Driver Fitness Tests: An option or a prerequisite?

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The Zimbabwe Republic Police reported there was an increase in fatal road accidents during the 2018 Easter period compared to the same period in 2017. A total of forty eight people were killed in 2018 compared to twenty-five in 2017. The police attribute the cause mostly to human error which could have been avoided. The errors include failure to observe road rules and regulations, failure to travel at safe speeds. In most of these accidents, the driver is licensed and has experience in driving. One is left to wonder if just having the drivers' license is enough to ensure safety on the road. Evidently, it is not. This, however, does not in any way condone having unlicensed drivers on the road. There are some underlying factors involved which are not highlighted in our procedure of getting a drivers' license. These underlying factors can be highlighted through Driver Fitness Tests.

Driver Fitness Tests are high quality, scientifically based tests used in traffic psychology research and practice. They can also be called traffic psychology ability tests. These tests can be used in a wide range of ways in two main applications. On one hand, they serve to highlight performance deficits in potentially dangerous drivers while on the other they are also used to select "drivers with increased responsibility". Certain groups are classified as drivers with increased responsibility. They include taxi drivers, bus drivers, driving instructors and drivers of vehicles transporting dangerous goods and heavy loads.

Drivers' performance deficits and inappropriate attitudes are usually accessed if a driver has been convicted of a driving offense or if a driver's cognitive or physical ability is in doubt. This is not good practice especially in an instance where a trucking company is recruiting drivers. It will not be enough to consider a drivers' license alone during the selection process. In one research report, Reducing Workplace Accidents Using Analytics, Industrial Psychology Consultants (IPC) found that psychometric attributes of an individual can be used to predict proneness to road traffic accidents. At (IPC), many have been tested. The results that came out bring to light further information which is very crucial to consider during the selection process. Companies that employ drivers are already considering Driver Fitness Tests reports in their selection and skills audit procedures. I believe this should be the standard for all companies that employ drivers.

The test sets or dimensions are designed to assess those skills which are required of the drivers when on the road. Some of those include stress tolerance, reaction time and observation skills. The tests are classified into 3 main dimensions which are planning the journey, executing the journey and dealing with unforeseen situations. Under each dimension, there are tests to query the drivers' skills in that respective dimension. The tests are taken using the Vienna Testing System (VTS). The VTS is a test system for computerized psychological assessments. With it, digital psychological tests can be administrated and it provides automatic and comprehensive scoring, this saves both time and money in comparison to administrating and scoring paper-and-pencil tests manually. Once the candidate is done with the tests the report is generated automatically from the VTS. The report consists of scores exhibited

in a graphic format and text to explain the results.

Without the Driver Fitness Tests it's most likely we will find more drivers who present a great risk on the road driving buses, trucks with dangerous goods or heavy loads. This is a very big blow to all efforts being done to make our roads a little safer.

Jerry Ndemera is a consultant with Industrial Psychology Consultants. He helps companies and people, executives, leaders at all levels with evidence-based tailor-made business solutions.

To learn more about Driver Fitness Tests or book for a free demonstration you can contact Jerry Ndemera on jerry@ipcconsultants.com or call +263 0242 481946-8.

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