

Towards zero road crashes

IN 2023, Malaysia recorded its highest ever road crash numbers in history at 598,635. This translates to losing 6,433 lives, as reported by the Royal Malaysia Police. This is a huge health burden for our country's population of 34.67 million to bear.

To address this "traffic pandemic", everyone must be involved, it cannot be left to the government alone to handle. Road safety is everyone's responsibility.

In the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, the World Health Organisation clearly states that if we are to see a significant improvement in road safety, then employers must play a major role to complement existing government efforts. This is because there is more of a bond between employer and employee than anonymous government agencies and workers.

The employer must look beyond workplace safety and explore adopting the safety of the employee while travelling to and from work. If the employer emphasises the importance of safety to all its employees, this will translate into behaviour modification from unsafe to safe practices on the road among its employees. It is, after all, unlikely that they would go against requirements made by their paymasters.



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For employers, having a safe workforce means loss of productivity will drop as fewer workers will be involved in road accidents that result in having to be away from work. There would also be lower compensation expenses for long-term medical bills, disability, and loss of lives. For employees, it would obviously mean a better quality of life without injuries or disability. It's a win-win situation for both.

The employer should consider adopting a Vision Zero initiative for traffic summonses starting with the two-week Hari Raya travel period coming up soon next month – i.e. encouraging employees to maintain a traffic summons-free record.

(Vision Zero is a global move-

ment to end traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries by taking a systemic approach to safety; visionzerochallenge.org.)

This can gradually be extended until it becomes a year-long endeavour. The next step is Vision Zero Road Crashes, followed by Vision Zero Road Injuries and Fatalities. To sustain these initiatives, the employer can reward employees who stay safe on road and help the company reach its Vision Zero targets. If every employer adopts these steps, society at large will begin to see the benefits.

To help organise, coordinate, monitor and spearhead Vision Zero, the role of the company's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) officer is crucial. The OSH

officer can link road safety with workplace safety and issue travel advisories and safety tips, thus raising awareness about safety in general.

We can begin small, one company at a time, then one industry at a time before eventually scaling up and replicating the system nationwide to improve our overall road safety record.

Some companies are already showing that this kind of employer-driven initiative works well. Examples of guidelines they use include no mobile phone usage while driving, usage of seat belts in all seating positions, complying with speed limits, ensuring sufficient rest before and after long journeys, limiting travelling time in a day, always using the reverse parking method, and promoting public transport usage, cycling, and walking.

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