Virtual Driver
Simulation Training Improves Hazard Recognition Skills

Organizations can be liable to the tune of millions of dollars for employees' actions while driving for work, even when driving to and from work on personal time. The more your employees drive, the more exposure your organization has to crashes.

When you add distracted driving and the upcoming hazardous winter weather to that equation, the potential for crashes, costly lawsuits and personal injuries is even greater.

Safety professionals are finding that "traditional" training methods don't always allow for confirmation of whether that training improved a driver's decision making skills behind the wheel. Often someone demonstrates they can learn the answer and click the mouse, which is not the same as quickly identifying a hazardous situation at 45 miles per hour. If you want to be sure, you need to provide the most engaging user experience addressing all four dimensions of safe driving: driver's ed, vehicle control, hazard detection and behavior decision.

Drive down the cost of training: when you include lost work hours, employee salary costs and travel expenses, classroom based driver training is an incredibly expensive ongoing effort on the part of fleets. What's a better form of training in less time? Consider virtual training, which is more than just simulation. It is a progressive learning method that combines leading-edge graphics with fully interactive multi-media providing the most effective learning experience possible. Simulation puts the students in dangerous situations and watches what they actually do, verifying competency. Only in simulation can you reinforce training using replay, slow motion and multiple points of view. "Simulation training can not only lower crash incidents and associated costs, but also dramatically lower the cost of training, increasing the rate at which drivers are trained, while proof-of-course-completion allows corporations to easily update training records," said Bob Davis, president & CEO of Virtual Driver Interactive.

Does Simulation Training work?
For decades, simulation has proven to be an effective training tool for the military and first responders. The Air Force, Marine Corps, the Army and Navy have trained their airmen, sailors and soldiers in the rules of engagement, judgment, combat , marksmanship and indirect fire with simulators. Before pilots fly the world's most advanced fighter jets, they first fly on simulatorsz. Each is completely safe, because they can crash on a simulator and live through it. They become more technically proficient, safe and mission-ready.

Recent research has investigated the training benefits to corporate fleet drivers that driving simulators provide. There is compelling evidence that simulator-based instructions provides a high transfer of learning rate on new and experience drivers.

Moreover, it has been proven that making mistakes is a key dimension to learning. Flach et al (2008) stated, "This is likely to be one of the values of simulators – they offer an opportunity to learn from mistakes in a forgiving environment."

Virtual HD

After engaging in feedback discussions with fleets, VDI created a training program to provide a 90-minute course taken via a full-sized simulator crafted to mimic exact vehicle characteristics as required by the customer. Virtual Hazard Detection, or Virtual HD is a voice controlled, interactive simulation-based driver safety program designed specifically for corporate driver training programs.

Industry-leading organizations have already signed on and are now improving their employees' hazard recognition skills, lowering accident rates and reducing distracted driving. It focuses on eliminating the primary cause for crashes: a failure to recognize and react to hazardous driving situation. A key element of its vehicle specific training mimicking actual driving experiences on the job – whether it is a package delivery truck, van or passenger car.

Virtual hazard detection training can not only lower crash incidents and associated costs, but also dramatically lower the cost of training while increasing the rate at which drivers are trained. Virtual HD provides compelling training in these concepts: Deterring distracted driving; Safe following distance: Motorcycles as a unique hazard: Expert scanning technicques; Rapid hazard anticipation and detection; Parking lots safety strategies; Covering the brake to reduce dangers: City, highway, commerical and rural environments; Day and night situations with inclement weather conditiosn including snow and rain.

"Simulation training is a creative way to address the challenge of distracted driving and the possible payoff, meausured in terms of human life, property damage, operations hindrance, and impact to brand name; it just made sense to add the simulator to our safety program," said Jeff Spackman, director, corporate safety at Bright House Networks. "VDI is working with corporate safety department to reduce driving errors, save money and, bottom line, to save lives."