

The State of Fleet Management

Insights on Priorities for Today's Fleet Managers



2026 STUDY



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BACKGROUND

In 2026, the J. J. Keller Center for Market Insights completed its sixth annual study examining the evolving challenges facing fleet management.

The findings in this report equip industry stakeholders with clearer visibility into fleet managers' priorities and pressures, supporting more informed conversations — and better outcomes — for the road ahead.



J. J. Keller Center for Market Insights

The J. J. Keller Center for Market Insights is the collaborative research arm of J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. The center originated in 2019 with a focus on sharing with the public trends and insights from an abundance of safety and compliance data gathered by J. J. Keller over decades serving more than 500,000 customers across the United States.

It publishes ongoing reports to spur discussion and advancements in safe, respectful workplaces, job sites, and highways through historical data, new proprietary studies, and collaborative studies with reputable, research-focused third-party organizations.

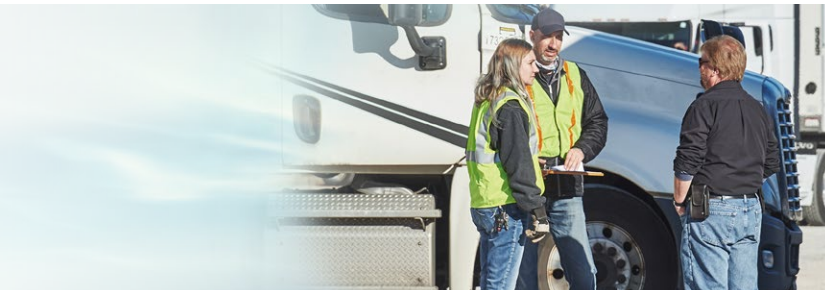
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OVERVIEW



Fleet Manager Top Concerns from the Study



Fleet managers' top-ranking concerns:

54% Effectively managing preventative maintenance to avoid losses due to breakdowns or accidents

49% Staying up to date on changes in regulations

47% Ensuring that training results in drivers being fully qualified and compliant with safety and regulatory requirements

#1 FLEET MANAGER CONCERN BY TOPIC AREA

The top-ranking challenges fleet managers face in 2026 were broadly categorized in seven areas:

DRIVER KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

How to safely and correctly operate their specific vehicle types

30%

DRIVER TRAINING

Ensuring training results in drivers being fully qualified and compliant with all safety and regulatory requirements

47%

MANAGING COMPANY EXPENSES

Effectively managing preventative maintenance to avoid losses

54%

NEW VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

Drivers accepting and properly using new vehicle technology

45%

FMCSA COMPLIANCE

Staying up to date on changes in regulations

49%

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Effectively tracking, planning, and scheduling routine vehicle maintenance

43%

OVERALL SAFETY

Employees knowing that they are valued, and that's why we want them to be safe

49%

TRENDING CONCERNS (2021-2026)

Over six years of research, the following items have **consistently been important challenges** among fleet managers:

DRIVER TRAINING

- Training that is specific to the unique needs of drivers, operations, vehicles, or industry
- Drivers applying what they learn in training

FMCSA COMPLIANCE

- Staying up to date on changes in regulations

OVERALL SAFETY

- Employees consistently making safe choices across scenarios
- Leadership consistently showing that safety is important

NEW VEHICLE TECHNOLOGY

- Drivers accepting and properly using new vehicle technology

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

- Effectively tracking, planning, and scheduling routine vehicle maintenance

MANAGING COMPANY EXPENSES

- Effectively managing preventative maintenance to avoid losses due to breakdowns or accidents
- Finding and retaining high-quality drivers



SIGNIFICANT INCREASES (2025–2026)

As fleets sharpen their focus on prevention and visibility, managers reported notable **year-over-year increases spread over three categories:**



Category	What Fleet Managers Found Most Important	2025	2026	Change
FMCSA Compliance	Knowing quickly when a driver is non-compliant	16%	31%	+ 15%
	Staying up to date on changes in regulations	41%	49%	+ 8%
Vehicle Maintenance	Knowing when a repair is needed before a breakdown or accident occurs	36%	43%	+ 7%
Driver Knowledge & Skill	How to avoid injury while working and driving	20%	26%	+ 6%
	How to avoid fatigued driving	5%	9%	+ 4%

EXPERT INSIGHT

"In 2026, fleets are deliberately shifting from reactive fixes to **prevention, visibility, and early intervention** — a practical response to tight margins and the high cost of a preventable crash, compliance violation, or equipment failure. That's why more managers emphasize **knowing quickly when a driver is non-compliant and identifying repair needs before a breakdown**, then embedding those controls into daily operations through a robust safety and compliance program."

Daren Hansen, Sr. Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.

JOB STRESS



Fleet managers continue to operate under sustained pressure, though intensity eased slightly year over year. **Two-thirds (67%) describe their role as very or moderately challenging**, down 3% from 2025, citing regulatory change, compliance tasks, hiring/retention, documentation, and maintenance as persistent headwinds.

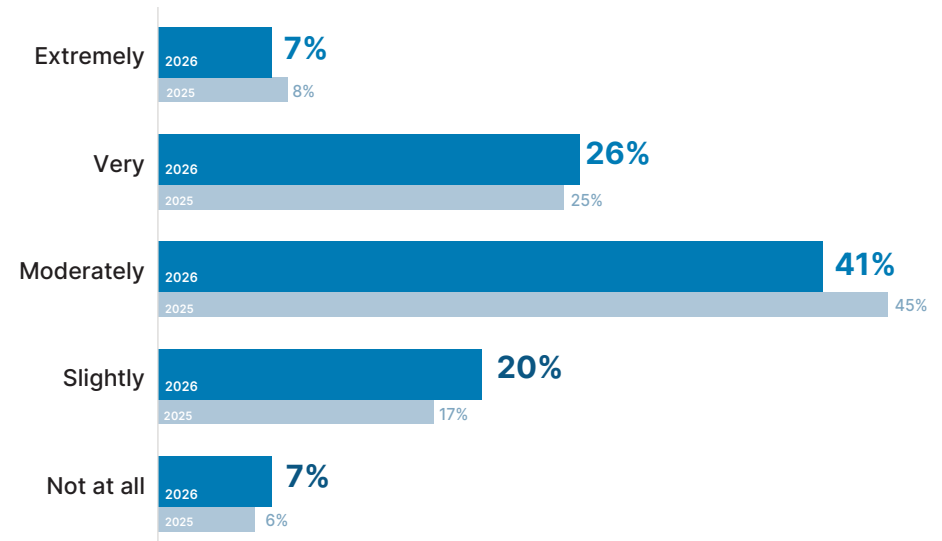
The day-to-day reality remains busy and complex, just a bit less acute than last year.

EXPERT INSIGHT

*"Fleet managers are still juggling regulatory change, documentation, hiring/retention, and maintenance — areas where **small gaps can snowball into major problems on the road and in the courtroom.** A well-structured safety and compliance program with clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and regular training reduces last-minute scrambles and makes risk more predictable."*

Daren Hansen, Sr. Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH MY JOB IS CURRENTLY CHALLENGING



LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES

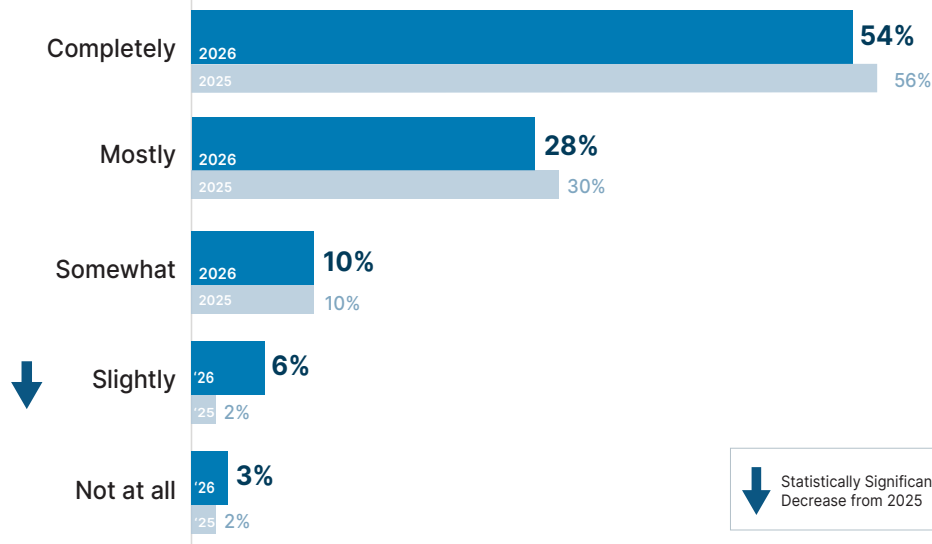
Signals from leadership remain strong when it comes to safety. A majority say their company **continuously strives to improve safety and choose safety when it conflicts with profitability.**

However, 19% of fleet managers say their company **only somewhat or not at all strives** to improve driver and employee safety.



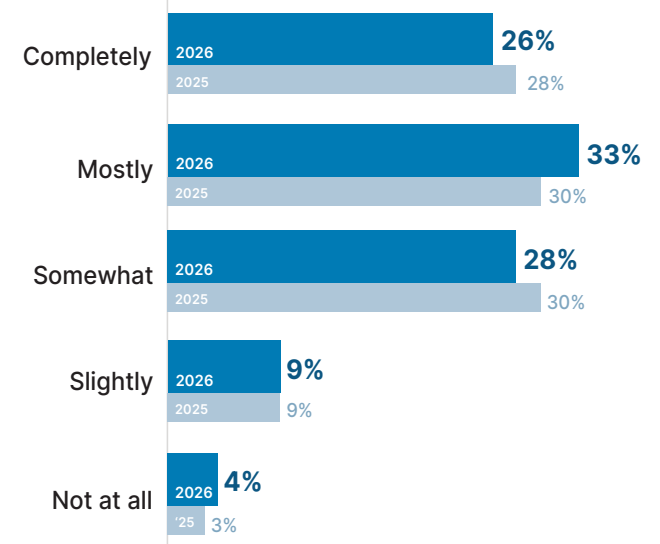
“MY COMPANY CONTINUOUSLY STRIVES TO IMPROVE DRIVER AND EMPLOYEE SAFETY.”

% of Respondents Agreeing



“MY COMPANY IS MAINLY FOCUSED ON SOLUTIONS THAT IMPROVE THE BOTTOM LINE/PROFITABILITY.”

% of Respondents Agreeing



DRIVER KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS



The **ability to safely and correctly operate their specific vehicle type** remains the single most important driver competency (30%), though its importance fell notably this year as attention is shifting toward **distraction avoidance** (29%) and **injury prevention** (26%).

The pattern suggests fleets are doubling down on practical, high-frequency risks and reinforcing core habits that reduce incidents across vehicle types and operating environments.

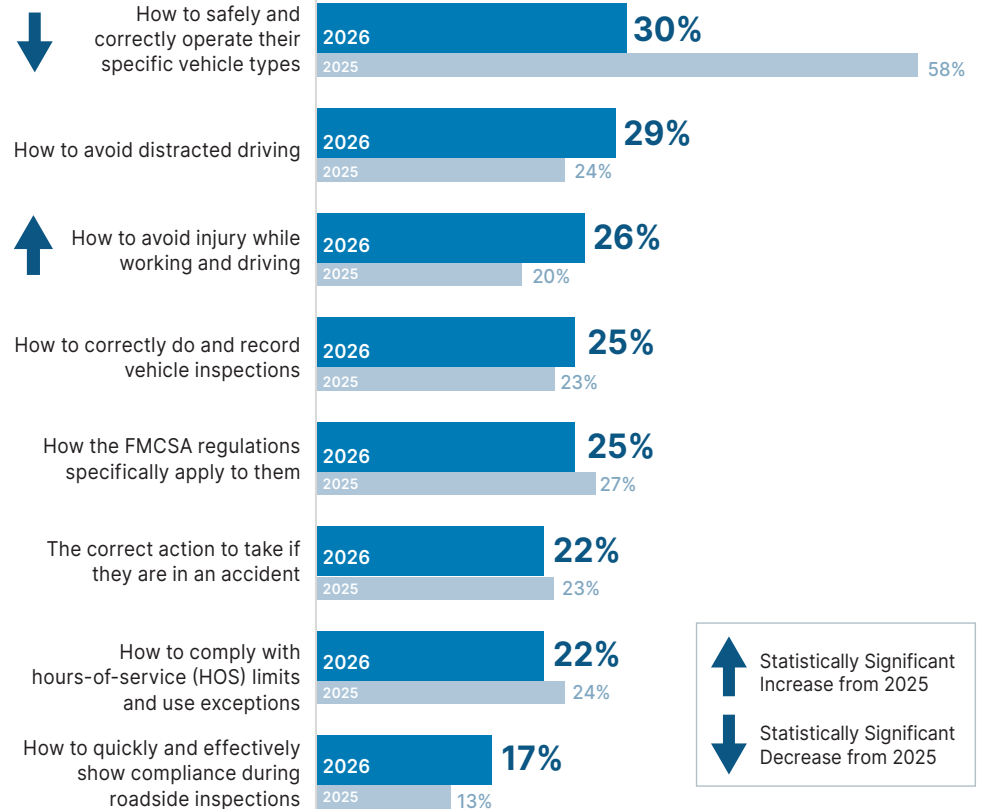
EXPERT INSIGHT

*"Drivers must be instructed in the FMCSRs, know how those rules apply, and understand incident response, vehicle inspections, and injury prevention. Reinforcing these fundamentals through coaching and clear expectations helps drivers make **consistent, compliant choices that protect the public and the business.**"*

*Lucero Truszkowski, Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.*

MOST IMPORTANT DRIVER KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

% of Respondents Choosing a Skill as Most Important



Multiple selections were permitted.

DRIVER TRAINING

In 2026, the top training priority is outcome-based: training that **produces fully qualified and compliant drivers**. Tailoring content to each fleet's vehicles, routes, and operations stays critical, but there's a measurable dip in emphasis on drivers applying what they learn and on documentation-heavy tasks.

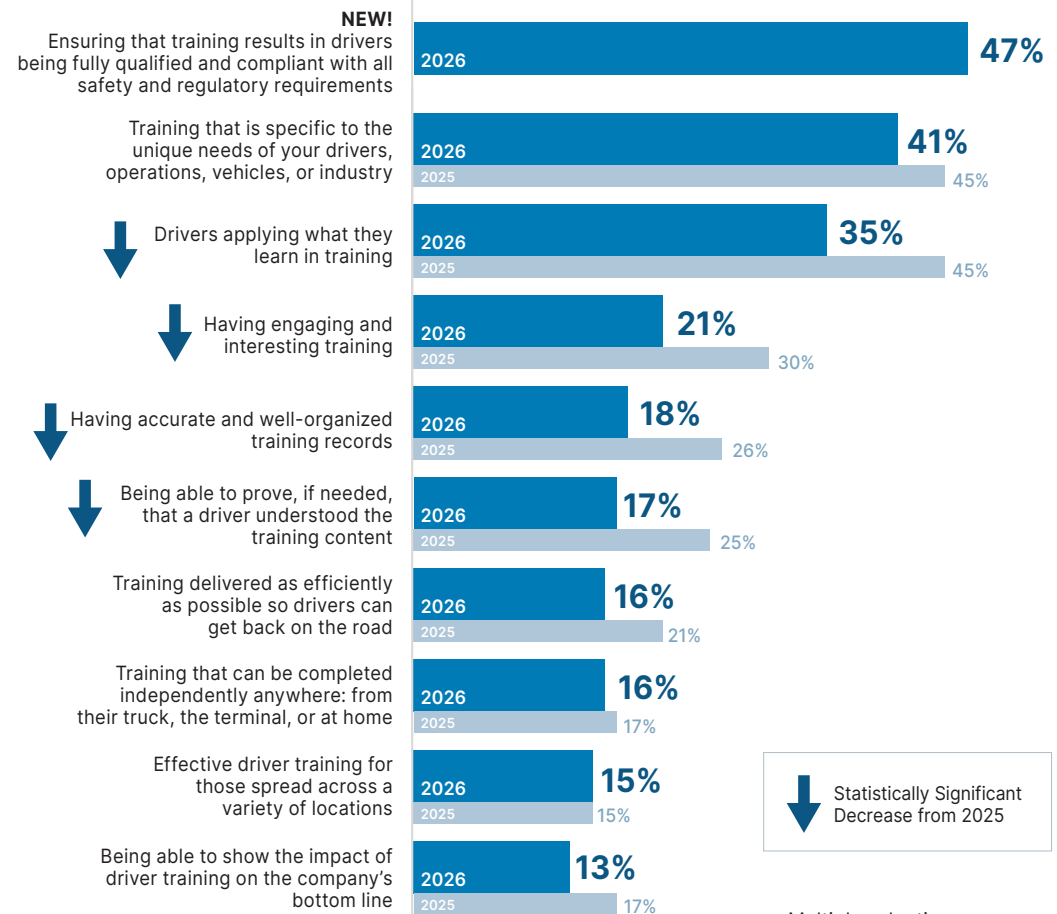
EXPERT INSIGHT

*"Training should be **role-specific and applicable to drivers' day-to-day functions**, with blended delivery and follow-up so drivers retain and apply what they learn. Treating training as an ongoing investment strengthens safety cultures and supports compliance, especially when content reflects the vehicles, routes, and regulatory demands drivers face regularly."*

*Lucero Truszkowski, Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.*

MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF DRIVER TRAINING

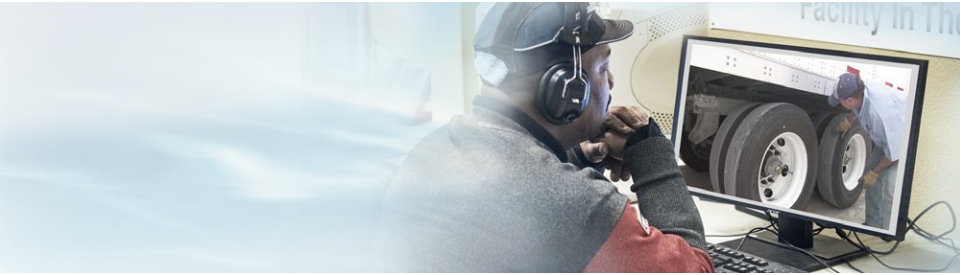
% of Respondents Choosing an Aspect as Most Important



↓ Statistically Significant Decrease from 2025

Multiple selections were permitted.

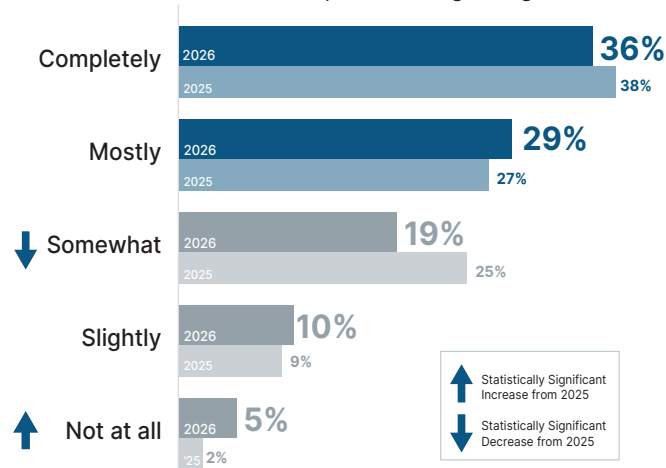
TRAINING METHODS



More than half (65%) of fleet managers reported that their company either mostly or completely emphasizes continuous learning. However, that leaves a meaningful remainder who see only modest support for continuous learning, indicating there is room to formalize ongoing micro-learning and corrective coaching across locations and shifts.

“MY COMPANY EMPHASIZES CONTINUOUS LEARNING”

% of Respondents Agreeing



EXPERT INSIGHT

*“The most effective programs pair hands-on instruction with **short refreshers and on-demand learning**, then back it up with **clear, organized training records**. Strong documentation proves compliance while continuous coaching keeps essentials top-of-mind long after the initial course.”*

*Lucero Truszkowski, Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.*

PRIMARY COMPANY TRAINING METHODS

% of Respondents Using the Training Methods Below

BY AN IN-PERSON INSTRUCTOR
68%

ONLINE
52%

INFORMALLY AND AS NEEDED
34%

THROUGH BOOKS OR EMPLOYEE MANUALS
23%

Multiple selections were permitted.

OVERALL SAFETY CULTURE

Fleet safety culture continues to move from rules to relationships. Respondents prioritize ensuring **employees feel valued, safety is placed above all else, and safe choices are consistent**

across scenarios. This focus reflects a belief that a stronger safety culture — and visible leadership alignment — drives more reliable day-to-day safety decisions than policy alone.

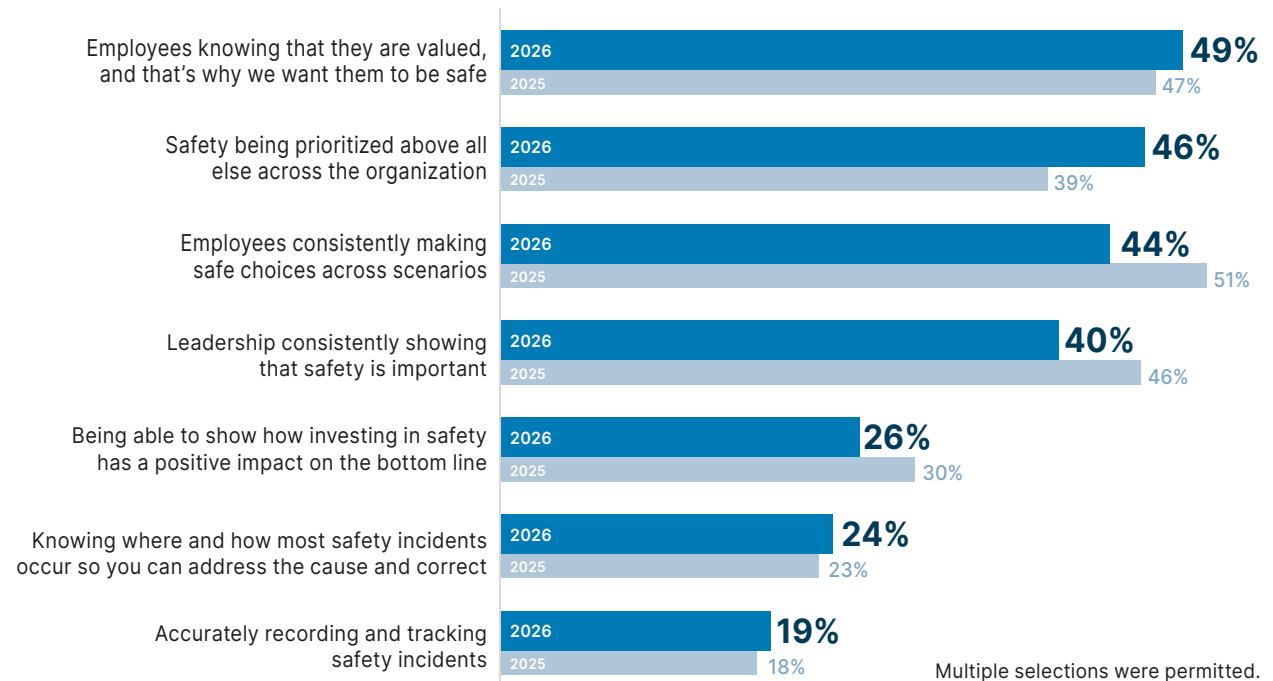


Watch the Safe & Smart® Driver Training Program in action!



MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF OVERALL SAFETY CULTURE

% of Respondents Choosing Aspects as Most Important



COMPLIANCE

Regulatory vigilance and **real-time compliance visibility** define 2026.

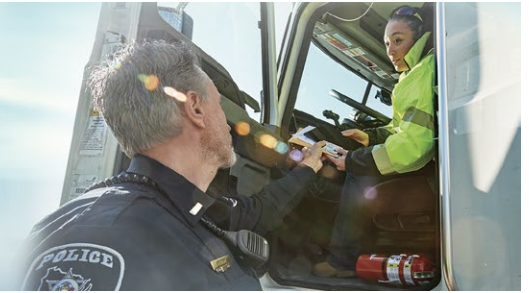
While maintaining accurate files still matters, fleet managers are shifting focus toward immediately identifying non-compliant drivers and understanding how changing regulations affect day-to-day operations.

This reflects a broader industry move from documentation to rapid detection and corrective action.

EXPERT INSIGHT

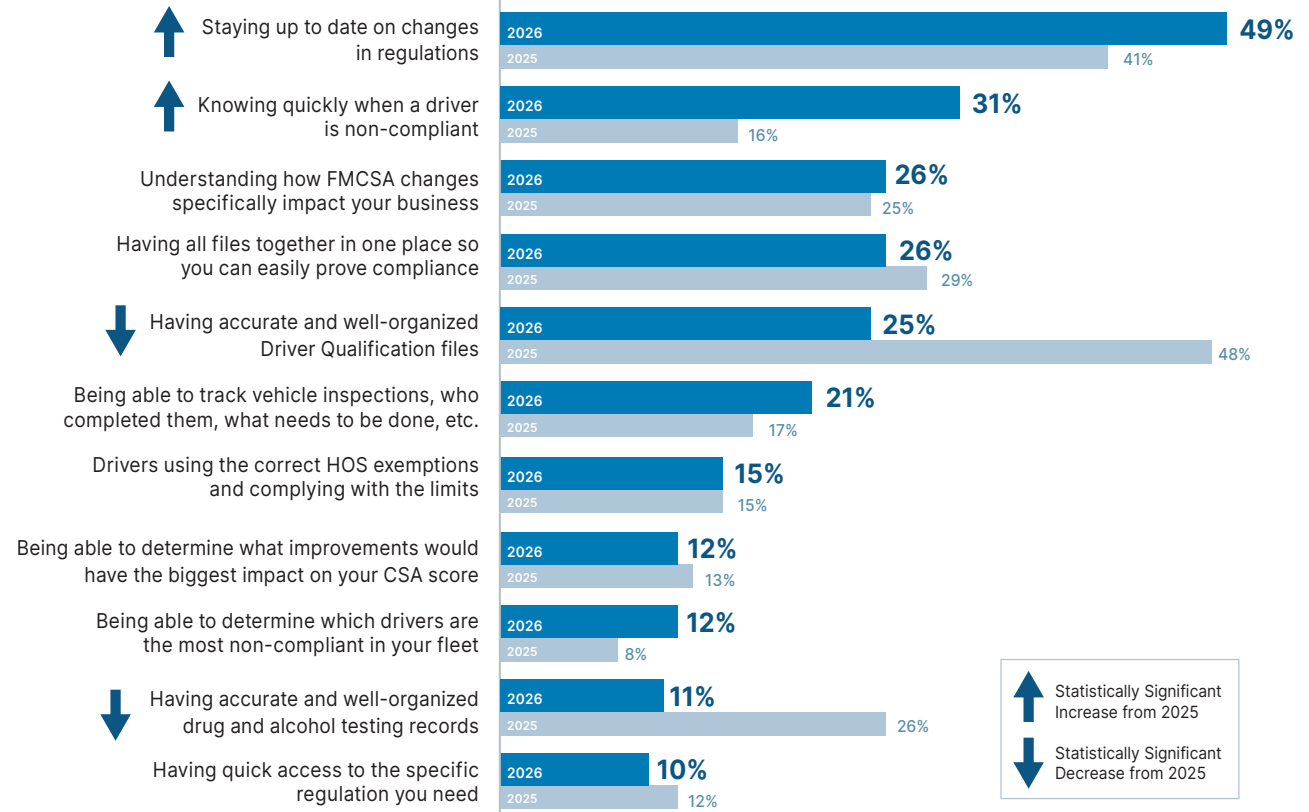
*"Compliance starts with **knowing the rules and how they apply, training** those affected, running a **comprehensive safety program**, then **auditing regularly** to find and fix gaps before they become violations or litigation. In short: stay informed, document well, and act early."*

*Daren Hansen, Sr. Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.*



MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF FMCSA COMPLIANCE

% of Respondents Choosing an Aspect as Most Important



Multiple selections were permitted.

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Maintenance priorities in 2026 continue shifting toward **prevention and early detection**. Fleets are emphasizing routine preventative maintenance and identifying repair needs before they escalate into breakdowns or out-of-service (OOS) events.

At the same time, urgency around instant damage detection has eased from last year's peak, signaling a recalibration toward long-term vehicle reliability rather than reactive fixes.



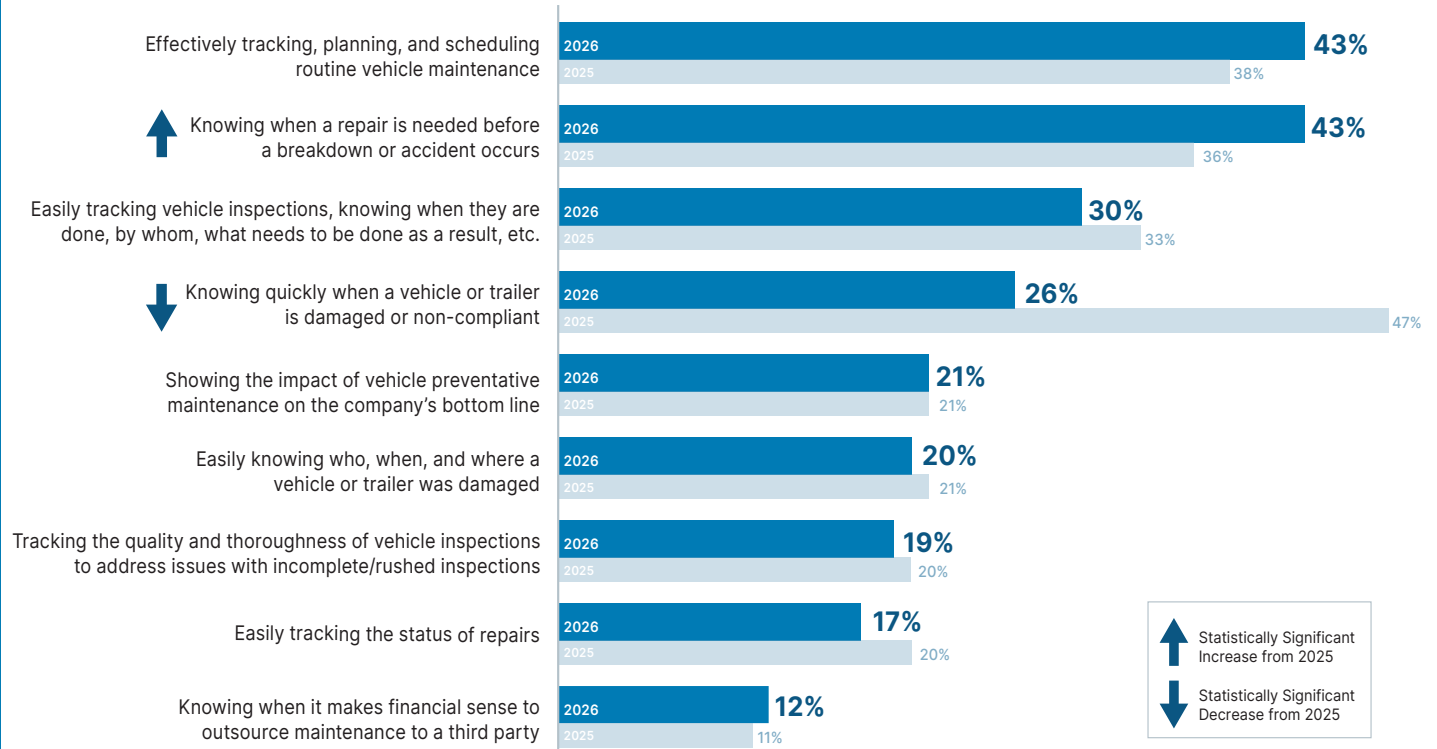
EDITOR INSIGHT

"A disciplined preventative maintenance system that includes **thorough inspections, ongoing preventative maintenance, and preemptive parts replacement** prevents breakdowns and out-of-service orders. **Well-kept maintenance records** are a valuable asset during audits or claims, reflecting operational diligence and a commitment to safety."

Daren Hansen, Sr. Compliance Expert
J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.

MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

% Most Important



RESPONDENT COMMENTS



Common challenges noted by fleet managers include compliance, keeping up with regulations, hiring and retaining drivers, recordkeeping, and fleet maintenance.

MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF A FLEET MANAGER'S JOB

Open-Ended Comments

Fleet Management & Maintenance

"When a driver comes with a mechanical issue, diagnosing the problem sometimes can be tough."

"The ability to track all drivers and assets, both tractors and trailers, in one database."

"Balancing the need to meet customer demands with maintenance and compliance."

Hiring & Retaining Good Drivers

"The most challenging part of this job is hiring competent drivers."

"Finding drivers who are qualified and willing to work."

"Hiring qualified drivers for seasonal work."

Staying Up to Date on Regulatory Changes

"We are a small company and therefore we all wear many hats. Keeping up with all of just everything can be challenging."

"I cover EHS + DOT. That's a lot of regs to keep up on, as well as the rest of my job duties."

Paperwork and Recordkeeping

"Trying to stay abreast of all the compliance paperwork."

"Getting previous employers to respond to Verification of Employment checks."

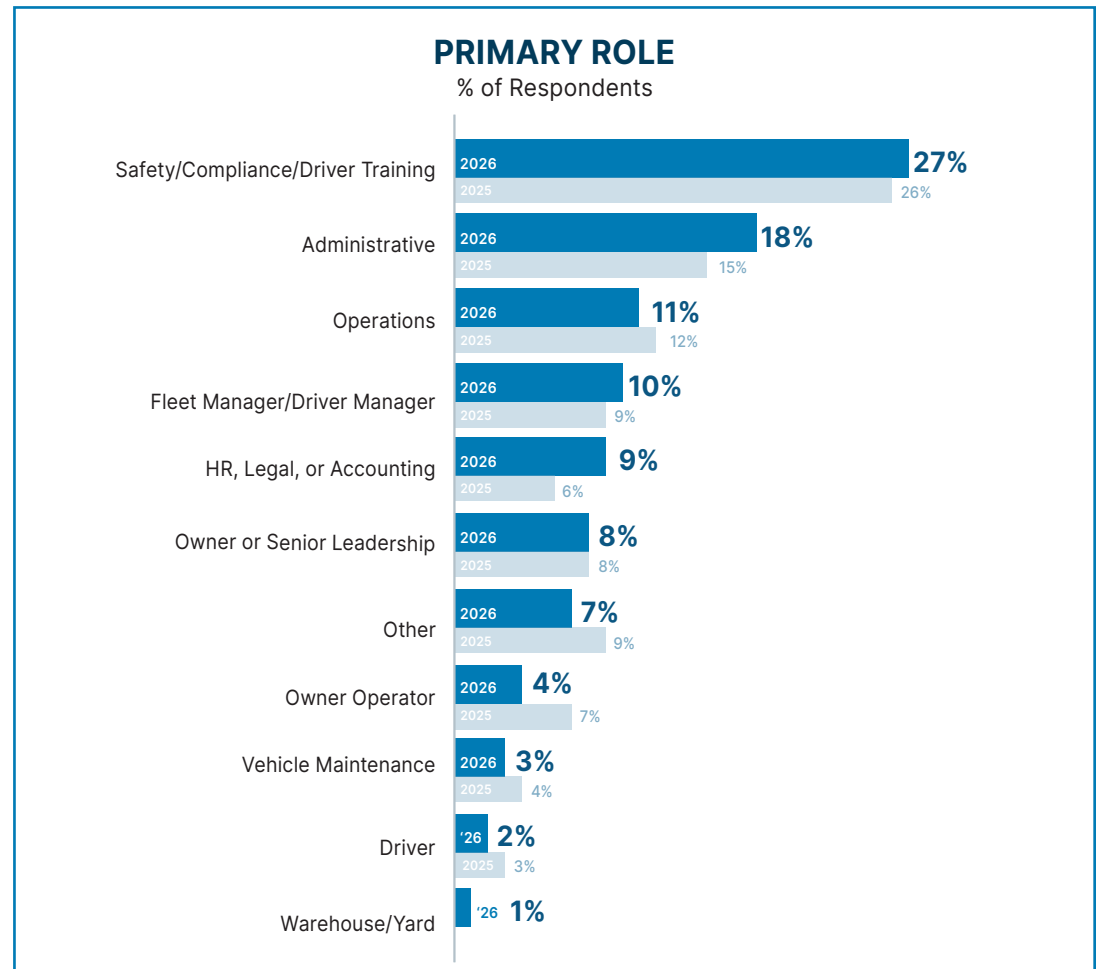
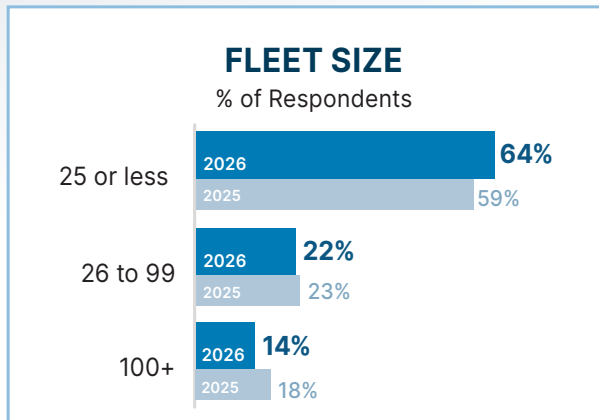
"Keeping all paperwork in compliance before deadline."

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The primary roles of survey respondents range from safety and compliance to driver training, administration, operations, fleet/driver management, driving, and warehouse/yard responsibilities.

The survey was fielded January 7-22, 2026, and included 550 unique respondents.

Eighty-six percent (86%) work in fleets with less than 100 trucks, and 64% work in fleets with 25 or fewer trucks.



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Reduce Accidents with Defensive Driver Training

J. J. Keller's **Safe & Smart® Principles of Defensive Driving** program is tailored to help your specific operation improve fleet safety and reduce the risk of crashes.

The in-depth curriculum—delivered by veteran instructors—combines online courses, classroom instruction, behind-the-wheel, range training, vehicle inspections and a road test, with **options for direct-to-driver training or certification of your in-house trainers.**



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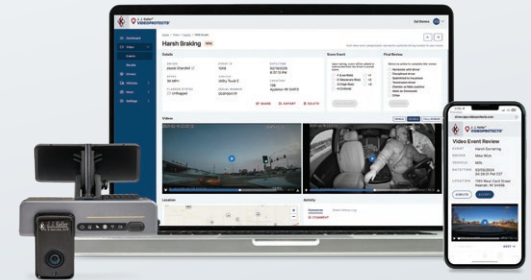
A dash cam with a safety perspective

The VideoProtects® Fleet Camera System protects your driver and operation, **minimizes your risk** in and out of the courtroom, and **enhances your safety efforts.**

VideoProtects offers insight into risky driving events through its continuous recording (engine on) dual-facing dash camera with artificial intelligence.

The **VideoProtects** system works with any fleet, regardless of ELD provider. Its user-friendly back office delivers a **powerful remote driver coaching workflow** that allows you to review, score, and prioritize events. It's an innovative solution that promotes driver accountability and reduces risky driving events, like:

- Forward collision
- Tailgating
- Distracted driving
- Fatigued driving
- Harsh acceleration, cornering, and braking
- Cellphone use
- Seat belt use, and more!



In addition to the platform-independent system, Encompass- and Geotab-compatible systems are also available for full fleet compliance.

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