

Telematics: Friend or Foe for Fleet Safety?

How to get real value from driver data



Research-led solutions for safer driving



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The promise of telematics

Telematics systems have transformed how fleets monitor performance, offering managers a wealth of real-time data on driving style, route choice, and vehicle health.

By measuring events such as speeding, harsh braking, and cornering, telematics can help identify unsafe patterns and prompt targeted feedback.

When integrated into wider safety programmes, these tools can reduce collisions, lower fuel use, and improve scheduling efficiency.

While telematic systems often come with significant upfront costs, which may prevent smaller companies from investing, it's easy to see why telematics became the go-to technology for larger companies managing occupational road risk. But are they enough on their own?



The benefits of telematics

When properly applied, telematics data provides fleet managers with:

- ✓ **Objective, data-driven insight:** Provides quantitative information on speed, braking, and acceleration — giving managers a clear, evidence-based view of driver performance.
- ✓ **Visibility across the fleet** - Allows managers to review both individual and aggregate driving patterns to identify risks, target training, and track progress.
- ✓ **Driver self-improvement** - Many systems let drivers view their own data, helping them recognise and correct risky habits while promoting accountability.
- ✓ **Positive reinforcement** - When linked to recognition schemes, telematics can reward safe and efficient driving rather than focusing solely on penalties.

Together, these benefits make telematics a valuable part of proactive fleet management. By turning driving behaviour into measurable data, managers can identify risks early, target training effectively, and encourage safer, more accountable driving through positive feedback and recognition.



The challenges of telematics

Despite the advantages, there are several important limitations that many fleets experience when implementing telematics systems:

Alert fatigue

Depending on the sensitivity of the system, over time both managers and drivers can become desensitised to the large number of alerts generated by telematic systems. When every harsh brake or acceleration triggers a notification, the value of those warnings is reduced and engagement with the system can decline.

Driver backlash

Drivers sometimes view telematics as a surveillance tool rather than a support system. If feedback feels punitive rather than constructive, morale suffers, and some may even find ways to disable or ignore the system.

One way to mitigate this is to incentivise good driving more frequently than penalising bad behaviour — while still addressing serious breaches.

Unclear scoring and data methods

Not all telematic data is created equal. Some suppliers generate composite “risk indices” based on proprietary formulas that are difficult to interpret.

When the method of calculation is hidden to protect intellectual property, managers may find it hard to understand or trust what the data truly means.

The limits of measurement

Telematics can show what happened, but not why. It can record a harsh brake, but it can't reveal whether that action was caused by poor anticipation, distraction, or an unavoidable external factor. To truly understand cause, you need methods that measure perception, judgement, and decision-making — not just vehicle movement.

The ethics of relying solely on telematics

There's an old saying that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour, and telematics certainly speaks to this.

But ethically, it's questionable to assess drivers only on what has already happened. Telematics can identify risk retrospectively, but proactive assessment — identifying problems before a driver is exposed to risk — is safer and fairer.

Telematics should therefore be the last line of defence in managing road safety, not the first and only one.

Making telematics work for you

Telematics is most effective when combined with driver competence assessment and targeted training. Here's how to get the most from your data:

- **Integrate telematics with training insights** - Use data to identify who needs additional support and which behaviours to target.
- **Communicate the 'why'** - Share results transparently with drivers and frame feedback as a development opportunity, not a punishment.
- **Review the metrics that matter** - Focus on safety-critical data — near-crashes, harsh braking, and distraction events — rather than overwhelming staff with endless reports.
- **Close the loop** - Combine telematic data with video-based or VR assessments to understand why behaviour occurs and how to change it.



Tip: The goal isn't to monitor every action — it's to use technology to inform smarter, more human-centred safety management.



- Telematics can be a powerful tool for fleet safety — but only if the data leads to meaningful action.
- Used in isolation, it measures behaviour; combined with competence assessment and targeted training, it helps change it.

Next Step

Make your telematics data actionable. Use the [Fleet Safety Readiness Checklist](#) to integrate data with driver competence management.

