

# From Little Things:

Staged approach drives award-winning move to proactive safety



**Organisation: Sodexo Australia**  
**Fleet: 500+ (bus and light vehicles)**

## Case Study:

### From little things: Staged approach drives award-winning move to proactive safety

**Organisation:** Sodexo Australia  
**Fleet:** 500+ (bus and light vehicles)  
**Daily trips:** 800  
**Annual passengers:** 4 million  
**Annual kilometres:** 8.6 million

**Taking a staged approach to improving work driving safety has driven a proactive attitude where fatigue events, poor driving behaviour and the resulting incidents are prevented. And when you ferry 4 million passengers around remote parts of Australia each year, and have a workforce on-call at any time, it becomes non-negotiable. Sodexo Australia's shift to proactive safety has virtually eliminated fatigue and distraction, and the immediate and astounding results have been quickly recognised across industry.**



### Key Points

- A proactive approach to work driving safety prevents incidents before they happen
- Collecting and analysing data can inform proactive prevention by highlighting the causes of specific incidents to stop repeats and by identifying and addressing emerging trends
- Improving safety performance, or moving from a reactive to proactive approach, can be implemented over time rather than introducing a raft of measures simultaneously
- A staged approach can contribute to building a strong work driving safety culture over time, where driving is viewed as a critical workplace risk not a before and after work activity
- Creating an implementation plan to accompany safety measures, including explaining why they are being introduced, increases engagement and addresses resistance at the outset
- Regardless of company size, every organisation can invest in work driving safety to some degree, and any investment will drive safety performance as well as other benefits

## Overview

If you made a list of possible workplace driving risks a company operating a light and heavy vehicle fleet could face, Sodexo Australia (Sodexo) would tick almost every box.

The food and facilities management company, which services the Australian energy and resources sector, transports up to

4 million resource workers a year on its mass transport bus fleet to and from 20 remote mine sites across the Pilbara region. So, tick being responsible for the safety of many in addition to their own workers, as well as their own drivers negotiating difficult and often unfamiliar conditions.

Drivers work long hours, and, in addition, Sodexo support personnel are on call. So, tick fatigue as a significant risk to be managed across its light vehicle as well as mass transport fleet.

In addition to fatigue, sun glare, poorly-lit and unsealed roads, animal strikes and rapidly-changing weather can be added to the list.

And with a large number of bus and light vehicle drivers, tick the risks that come from non-professional driver behaviour, such as speeding, harsh braking or seatbelt violations.

With so many work driving risks to manage, in recent years Sodexo has prioritised prevention, taking a more proactive approach to safety risk management, built on driving being recognised as a critical workplace hazard.

The results of the shift to prevention have been immediate and astounding, to the point where fatigue events reduced by 96 per cent in its mass transport fleet and, within three months of introduction, 52 per cent in its light vehicle fleet. Speeding over 120kmh was virtually eliminated along with 93 per cent of distraction events.

The proactive approach has also contributed to building a stronger safety culture. Safety has always been a strong value for Sodexo, exemplified by a Senior Leadership-backed authority to stop work if workers do not feel safe, but the recognition of safety has grown among bus and light vehicle drivers and their local onsite supervisors.

The wider industry has also taken notice, with the company awarded the 2025 AfMA Fleet Safety Award.

This case study will briefly focus on Sodexo's approach to work driving safety and the key elements of how it moved to a proactive approach. To find out more, register for the [NRSPP webinar](#) or watch the [AfMA video](#).



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## Finding a Guardian Angel

To move to a more proactive approach to work driving safety, Sodexo management understood the organisation needed to change how work driving safety was understood and practised.

It's first major step towards a more proactive approach was installing a fatigue and distraction monitoring system across its 200-strong bus fleet in 2021.

Known internally as the Guardian Driver Safety System, it includes in-cab sensors that monitor driver's eyelids and seat vibration and audible alerts if a driver begins to close their eyes; it also detects distraction from mobile phone use by drivers.

Fatigue is a significant risk to manage with mass transport drivers working 11-hour shifts across 14-day swings, with a three-hour and other usual rest breaks in between. In addition, each bus carries up to 63 passengers, with Sodexo moving 1,500 people on a typical morning and completing 800 journeys each day, meaning that any fatigue event could lead to a major critical incident.

If the monitoring system generates a fatigue alert, the driver must pull over to the side of the road and contact their supervisor and conduct a welfare check to determine if they should continue the journey.

In addition to fatigue, early-morning starts mean drivers often contend with sun glare and late-night finishes see drivers negotiating poorly-lit roads. Given the location, moving livestock means animal strikes and rapidly-changing weather or heavy rain are frequent risks. Operating on public roads also brings other roads users into the hazard mix, including tourists inexperienced in regional driving, slow-moving road trains and wide loads.

As well as the mass transport bus fleet, Sodexo also has its own fleet of light vehicles for its support service personnel, such as electricians and other trade staff, sharing public roads or often moving in confined areas.

## Protection inside the vehicle

The success and acceptance of the Guardian fatigue and distraction monitoring system in the mass transport fleet saw the system also introduced three years later across the light vehicle fleet, complementing the existing in-vehicle monitoring system (IVMS), which monitors harsh acceleration, harsh braking and harsh cornering across Sodexo's entire fleet.

The IVMS delivers weekly 'red' and 'green' reports on driver behaviour, helping to identify any unsafe driving patterns early and allow for a timely response. If a driver is displaying poor performance, their supervisor will initiate a discussion and the driver will have additional training where necessary.

The Operations Manager and the Health, Safety and Environment team access and assess the reports, with the Operations Managers sharing the weekly report with regional managers and supervisors to show how their respective teams are performing.

If a light vehicle travels over 110kmh - the bus fleet is speed limited to 100kmh - the system sends an immediate alert to the local manager to follow up with that driver when they return. If it is an excessive speeding event where the vehicle speeds exceeds 120kmh, disciplinary action will likely be taken.

Weekly reporting on driving behaviour is supported by monthly meetings with department heads, where data analytics inform discussion around incidents and learnings as well as driver behaviour and other emerging trends, and monthly meetings with onsite regional leadership, which widens the safety performance discussion to identify region-specific challenges and solutions.

## Equipping Drivers

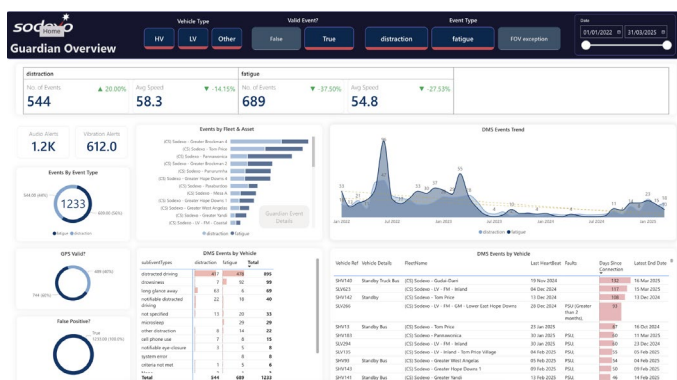
Sodexo employs an on-site driver trainer to complement rigorous onboarding and verification of competency procedures.

The Certificate IV trainer assessor role was introduced to address any skills gap for new drivers and to ensure skills were maintained as touchpoints with drivers were rare after induction and once they began working in the Pilbara.

In addition to operating at head office, the driver trainer delivers an onsite defensive driver training package Sodexo devised to ensure drivers' skills match the environment they operate in and the risks they face each day. The driver trainer will sit with drivers and take them through selected advanced driving skills, like emergency braking.

Every driver will be provided the upskilling session, which essentially acts as an advanced induction, within their first two 14-day swings.

### Reduction in 14-day continuous driving breaches



### Reduction in true fatigue events since implementation

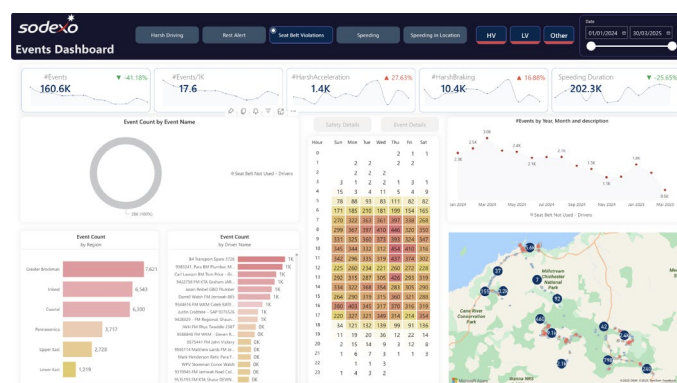
## The Full Picture

With two systems providing real-time driver and vehicle performance data, the next step for Sodexo after embedding their fatigue, distraction and driver behaviour monitoring systems across their bus and light vehicle fleet was unlocking the secrets from the data generated.

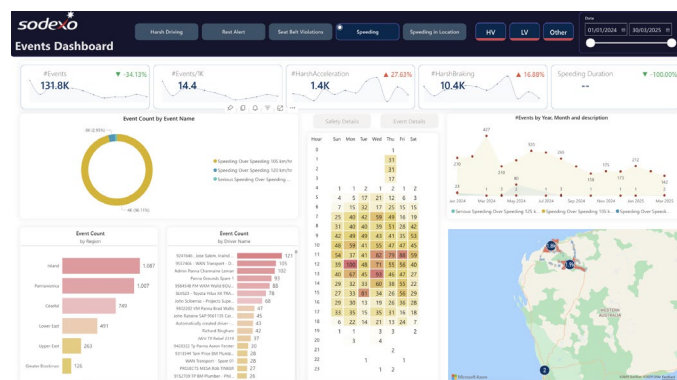
To do that, it has recently enlisted data analytics and safety solutions provider Drivetec to create a unified bespoke analytics platform that consolidates the data collected from the fatigue and in-vehicle monitoring systems into one platform.

This [safety performance dashboard](#) provides Sodexo with a clear visual representation of safety driving performance, upgrading data analysis from the company navigating and interpreting Excel data dumps and allowing trends in work driving safety performance to be identified over the longer term.

The Drivetec dashboard can also generate incident ‘hot spots’ by geolocating incidents. For example, it can highlight a high number of harsh braking incidents on a particular bend. In another example of Sodexo’s shift to a proactive stance, it is creating a role within the HSE team to monitor those heat maps so action can be taken to prevent incidents.



### Reduction in seat belt violations



### Reduction in speeding events

Sodexo's proactive approach to work driving safety is supported by an organisation-wide culture that supports and encourages positive reporting, where hazards are highlighted and near misses are investigated.

That attitude even extends to the mine workers who are daily passengers on its buses. They have access to Sodexo's complaints portal or avenues within their own business and they are encouraged to speak up if they do not feel safe.

Sodexo also has its own '3 Checks for Safety' critical risk identification system, which empowers drivers to take the time to identify hazards before every task, and a Stop Work Authority is in place if workers do not feel safe completing a task.

To reinforce and incentivise positive safety behaviours and create a culture of peer recognition, Sodexo has also implemented the Recognise Me Portal, where team members can nominate colleagues who demonstrate exemplary safety practices. Approved nominations are celebrated with a recognition message and Sodexo Reward Dollars that can be used in exchange for lifestyle brand vouchers through the Sodexo Reward Hub.

## Results On The Board

### Safety Performance

Sodexo's move to a proactive approach to safety had immediate and astounding results, headlined by a 96 per cent reduction in fatigue events in its mass transport fleet since 2022 and a 52 per cent drop in fatigue-related events in the first three months of introducing its fatigue system to its light vehicle fleet.

There was a 95 per cent reduction in speeding over 120kmh, 93 per cent of distraction events were eliminated over two years, and seatbelt violations reduced by 84 per cent.

### Data Driving Measures

The safety performance data Sodexo now generates is also proactively informing safety measures, allowing the company to understand the causes of an incident and intervene in real-time rather than retrospectively.

For example, data analysis showed the second week of drivers' swings were key times for fatigue events, particularly around the 10 day mark.

So Sodexo changed the roster structure, allocating routes that were less complex or less likely to be susceptible to fatigue events in the second week. For example, some work days included midday trips to the airport in addition to morning and afternoon runs. Where possible, drivers in their second week would not be allocated those runs, allowing them extra rest, or were assigned lighter duties.

Sodexo also found that fatigue events were not occurring in the early morning, as might be expected. Rather than feeling fatigue from an early morning wake up, fatigue events were peaking in the late morning. This information has influenced the way Sodexo now structures both its mass transport operations as well as light vehicle work.

One illustrative experience was when an electrician was called out at 1am to fix equipment. There were no issues on that trip, and the worker returned home, slept and woke for their usual shift.

That worker had a microsleep shortly after lunch. This experience highlighted that the impact of being woken in the middle of the night was felt the following afternoon rather than immediately. Such information has informed fatigue approaches, with workers called out of hours now allocated lighter duties or managed differently the following day.

### Shifting Attitudes

Sodexo workers using the company's light vehicle fleet are support workers, rather than professional drivers. So many viewed vehicles as a means of getting to work, and fatigue was a driving risk not on their radar.

Since moving to a more proactive approach, Sodexo has seen a 'maturity shift' for light vehicle drivers, where support workers now see 'driving as a part of my day rather than just the thing that happens before I get to work.' That shift in attitude and increased engagement has flowed through to site-level leadership.

Such shifts in attitude from drivers and their supervisors leads to safety being discussed more as part of everyday work tasks, leading to safety becoming 'business as usual' and contributing to building a stronger safety culture.

That increased engagement at the local level is evident in monthly meetings with head office where what's happening on the roads and events that happened in the previous month are discussed, with local onsite teams becoming more proactive in maximising the safety of themselves on the road and the people around them.

Sodexo's success in introducing its fatigue management system has also driven a shift in industry practice with international mining client, Rio Tinto Iron Ore, installing the system in its own fleet.

In fact, Rio Tinto has now upgraded its own group procedure to insist that all vehicles entering any of its sites in Western Australia, including contractors, must be equipped with fatigue monitoring.

### Runs on the board



**96% Fatigue events**



**93% Distraction events**



**95% Excessive speeding**



**84% Seatbelt violations**



### When Safety Gets Personal

"I made a video for our contractors where I spoke about when I was 18 I had a fatigue event myself," Sodexo Mass Transport Manager Scott Leahy said.

"I was working for a company in the UK and at 18 I didn't really know, no-one had ever told me, about your fatigue. First thing I knew was when I was swerving across three lanes of traffic on the freeway, or motorway in England.

"I was driving from London to the north of England for a training course. That was the first time I was doing that sort of journey. I woke up at 3am and had got through the early morning part fine. It was about a 5 hour drive so it would have been about half seven in the morning, so it's coming in the last hour of the drive.

***"First thing I knew was when I was swerving across three lanes of traffic..."***

"I got through the main bit and the sun had come up and then it all got a bit blank after that. I woke up on the third lane, and a driver behind me in convoy called me to say, 'what happened there?' I was very thankful that it was early enough that there was no one else on the road.

"I called my supervisor, shaken up, to say this has happened. The response was sort of 'OK well you'll be alright, have a coffee and crack on'; the Australian version is 'she'll be right' I think.

"It was 2005 and at the time there wasn't any communication or any Toolbox Talks or support around driver safety. The attitude was 'we need you up there so you go up there'.

"So my messaging in the video was around I'm really privileged to be able to be in a position now where we can influence behaviour, culture and safety. I'm proud that I can now help create that culture and support our drivers.

"Essentially being the leader that I needed back then."



## The Implementation Game

### Engaging the workforce

Sodexo was one of the first companies to roll out the Guardian System across a mass transport of fleet. Its proactivity extended to accompanying the introduction of fatigue monitoring cameras with a number of implementation measures to increase acceptance and break down outdated perceptions.

At the wider level, the system and the reasons for its introduction were discussed at weekly toolbox meetings, which also included outlining safety trends highlighted by the data, and as part of structured daily pre-start meetings, which include a collaborative risk assessment to highlight issues as well as recognising individual and collective safety successes.

In particular, Sodexo also paid attention to the messaging they were using, focusing on the positive of a 'safety system' rather than negative connotations around a 'camera', for example, as well as explaining the 'why' behind the system's introduction.

That messaging was supported by videos that were shared with workers. Content included internal videos educating workers about the risk, such as through sharing statistics around fatigue on the road, and case study content that personalised the issue, such as a video that outlined the fatigue event of a light vehicle driver and a powerful video from a former Sodexo worker who lost his family in a fatigue-related incident.

Efforts to engage workers with new safety measures and reinforce positive safety behaviours were also supported by recognising strong safety performance, through toolbox talks and as part of an internal safe driver month as well as recognising drivers through the Recognise Me Portal, where workers can nominate colleagues for their safety conduct or performance.

### Seven steps to implementation

- Project 'champion' outlining new system
- 'Mythbusting' workshops and discussion sessions
- Sharing the 'why' at toolbox and pre-start meetings
- Focus on positive language and messaging
- Video content educating workers about the risk
- Recognising and rewarding safety performance
- Workers sharing personal accounts and case studies

### Paving the way

One flow-on effect of planning the rollout of safety measures is it paves the way for introducing further measures, both through workers being more accepting of new measures but also promoting understanding that any new pieces are part of a larger puzzle.

For Sodexo, future plans include a control monitoring centre where safety is managed centrally. All vehicles would be mapped and if an alert came through, that could be managed in real-time by a dedicated 24/7 service centre and specifically trained personnel rather than responsibility falling to local onsite supervisors. The system is at proof of concept stage.

The company is also examining ways to improve safety and reporting for the mass transport fleet, such as installing panic buttons on buses and monitoring cameras that can be live streamed. Footage from such a system would only be used if there was an incident, allowing Sodexo to 'zoom in' on actual footage leading up to and during an incident, rather than relying on extracting and analysing data.

"We've reached the point where many of the systems are there now and the next step is pulling all those things together," says Scott Leahy. "The IVMS, the fatigue monitoring, we know our drivers are being protected and it's how we can take the system to the next level. We've stopped being so reactive that we can now start to build on those proactive steps.





*“The safety performance data Sodexo now generates is also proactively informing safety measures, allowing the company to understand the causes of an incident and intervene in real-time rather than retrospectively.”*

## Key Learnings

### *Can't manage what you can't see*

It is a well-known saying in industry but it reinforces one of the key learnings from Sodexo's safety journey: you can't manage what you don't measure.

The motivation for an increased focus on proactive safety was not watching drivers, it's keeping them safe. As Scott Leahy put it, “we have the power to be able to influence safety so why wouldn't you?”

### *Make it work for you*

Sodexo's innovation in improving work driving safety lies largely in its ability to tailor existing systems and products to its specific needs and safety objectives.

The externally-supplied monitoring and data analysis tools are available to all companies. However, Sodexo has collaborated with external suppliers to deliver a clear internal objective.

Importantly, the organisation's move to proactively managing work driving safety has been driven by a Mass Transport Manager who is committed to driver safety, is supported by organisation management and brings a personal perspective and passion to the cause.

### *Any safety investment is a good investment*

Sodexo believes the lessons taken from its proactive approach apply to organisations of any size operating in any sector. In fact, it's often more important for smaller organisations to provide the best safety systems they are able to.

For example, while the 'gold standard' may be collecting and analysing data to inform safety measures, Scott Leahy believes at the very least installing a fatigue monitoring system that alerts the driver to a microsleep or another fatigue event is worth with the investment.

Beyond protecting the driver, and by extension their employer, such measures also act as signal to the workforce that management values their safety and contribute to a strong safety culture.