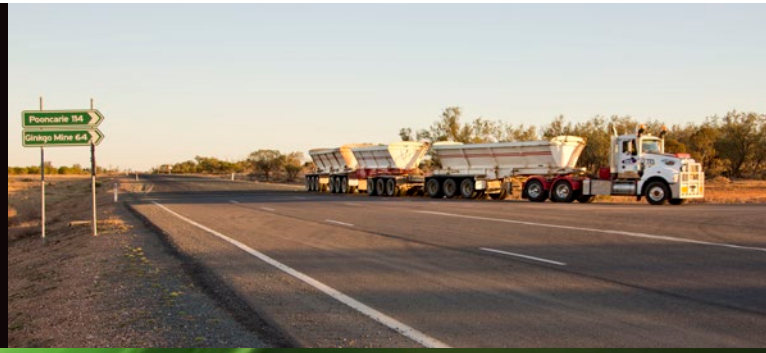
CASE STUDY:

BASIN SANDS LOGISTICS PTY LTD

WAKING UP TO THE DANGERS OF FATIGUE



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Basin Sands Logistics (BSL) is part of the Consolidated Group of Companies that has been in the Plant Hire and Bulk Haulage business in and around Broken Hill for more than 100 years. Located more than 1300 kilometres west of Sydney, employees are hired locally wherever possible. However, the nature of the business means many employees must travel the vast distances to and from Broken Hill, from cities across Australia.

This is remote and desolate country, with sections of straight flat highway that stretch as far as the eye can see. While a well-known Mecca for artists and photographers, the long straight roads leading into Broken Hill are particularly hazardous for long distance driving. It was this danger which prompted the company to explore how they could better manage the problem of driver fatigue.

In mid-2012, BSL General Manager, Adam Slattery investigated fatigue management solutions to see how he could protect his drivers from the effects of fatigue.

"BSL's key objective is to deliver our customers' loads on time and without incident. Key to this is having drivers who are alert and ready for work at whatever time of the day they are needed."

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"We needed to ensure our drivers were warned well before they could experience a highly dangerous micro sleep.

"Due to the location of our business and our customers, our drivers face several issues which can exacerbate fatigue, with long straight stretches of road, not much traffic passing and working shifts when they would normally be sleeping.

"Additionally, our roads have large numbers of wildlife, especially at dawn and dusk and when they jump out of nowhere onto the road, they can startle a driver who is becoming drowsy. That can be a serious hazard, especially if you are carrying a fully laden AB Triple.

"After researching a number of companies, we soon discovered Optalert had the only product capable of providing early warning detection.

"The early warning feature provided the key to our decision to implement Optalert's alertness monitoring system. We felt there would not be much point if your driver only gets an alarm after they have fallen asleep.

"That's like retrieving the 'black box' after an accident. It provides interesting information but doesn't turn back the clock or save your driver from injury.

"FAR TOO MUCH CAN HAPPEN IN THOSE SPLIT SECONDS AND WE KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES COULD BE DEVASTATING."

Optalert's technology measures an operator's eye blinks 500 times a second and provides a score from one to 10 using the patented Johns Drowsiness Scale, with higher numbers representing a higher risk. The system displays the operator's score in cab and also sends the individual scores back to a control centre using the Individual Risk Indicator System also known as the IRIS™. Both the operator and supervisors are able to see if the score is increasing and the system also delivers audible warnings if they reach medium or high risk levels. This multi-layered defence supplies added security for drivers alone on the highway and allows supervisors the opportunity to contact individual drivers if they are worried about their increasing score.

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"One of our customers has their mining site almost 300 kilometres south of Broken Hill with the return journey taking almost seven hours. That means our drivers go for long periods where they have no contact with other people including colleagues or the customer.

"With the Optalert system installed in our vehicles, we now feel so much more confident our drivers are alert at the wheel. And we have the added benefit of data collection which gives us real insight into the riskiest times of the day."

Optalert's system was installed in the first vehicle at BSL in October 2012 and Human Resources Officer Hayley Meuret said user acceptance came faster than they had initially imagined.

"The average age of our drivers is 45, which is not so old from an industry perspective. Of course any change can be difficult, especially if you have been doing the same job for many years, and we were expecting some resistance from our drivers."

"Surprisingly though, we have had really positive feedback, almost from day one. There was some concern from guys who wear prescription glasses, but they've been provided with prescription lenses which have been really well received.

"So, not only have our drivers welcomed the Optalert system, but through the constant monitoring and in cab display, they have been able to proactively manage their own fatigue.

"WE HAVE FOUND THE NUMBER OF HIGH RISK ALERTS HAS SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASED OVER THE PAST YEAR AND THESE RESULTS ARE REALLY ENCOURAGING FOR US.

"Our drivers now know the consequence of not getting adequate sleep and have made some really positive lifestyle changes to make sure they are safer on the road.

"And that is what it is all about – the safety of our people."