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Sourcing drivers for temporary or relief positions to cover off Omicron impact is expected to present challenges for operators

The wide appeal for relief drivers in the event Omicron takes hold and reduces the capacity for the current driver work force to continue driving in the freight sector has a few implications and challenges that employers need to be aware of if they do eventually choose to take onboard temporary staff.

The issues are not dissimilar to sourcing relief or temporary drivers in less demanding times. The following explanation offers a few hints on some aspects of employer's business models that might need consideration.

The drivers will come from a variety of avenues and some of the typical factors that have emerged in less troubled times will be familiar.

Firstly, drivers available through agents or by referral from colleagues or through open offers may not always meet the employer's needs. For example, insufficient skills, or lack of disclosure of a potential driver's previous worktime and compliance history may compromise the employing operator's safety performance and insurance obligations. Operators should check with their respective insurance brokers if there are any insurance provisions that may limit or inhibit the temporary employment of this class of driver

In many of these situations there may be difficulty establishing formal employment contracts due to the urgency of the need and in some cases, arrangements are likely to be by word of mouth until the formalities are completed.

Referrals from colleagues may not always be the best option and employers may have to be prepared to carry out some basic skill or competency testing and raise questions about driving enforcement history.

A simple vetting procedure can weed out substandard drivers or individuals.

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Even when sourcing relief staff from bona fide driver agencies it is still worth having a secondary filtering process to help ensure expectations of quality, competency and fitness for duty are all met.

Specific provisions may also be used in any contract entered into with an agency that provides relief drivers. A simple documented checking procedure agreed between both parties should help improve the confidence levels of operators acquiring relief or temporary drivers that they are in fact getting someone capable and fit for service.

Regarding contracts, Employment New Zealand has a lot of information about [types of employee](#) and [creating employment contracts](#).

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