

Traffic Safety



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Hours-of-service rule has increased fatigue, decreased safety, some truck drivers claim

Since the new federal hours-of-service rule went into effect on July 1, 2013, many truck drivers are reporting that their fatigue has stayed the same or increased – not decreased as the rule originally intended – and the rule’s new scheduling restrictions have reduced their safety.

In an effort to ensure truckers are rested before they hit the road, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration had mandated that non-exempt long-haul truck drivers take a 30-minute break after eight hours of continuous on-duty time. FMCSA also placed new limits on drivers’ ability to take 34 consecutive hours off to “reset” their weekly hourly limit. The new rule now allows drivers to use the 34-hour restart only once per week and as long as it includes two rest periods between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.



Truckers speak out on fatigue

In the months after the rule went into effect, the American Transportation Research Institute – the research arm of the Arlington, VA-based American Trucking Associations – surveyed more than 2,300 commercial truck drivers and 400 carriers about how the rule has affected their operations. About two-thirds of respondents said their fatigue increased after the rule went into effect, and about 30 percent reported no change. Truckers reporting a change noted that the mandatory 30-minute break causes their workdays to be longer because of the break itself and the time it takes to drive to a safe location.

In another survey, the Grain Valley, MO-based Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association’s research and education arm – known as the OOIDA Foundation – queried 4,000 OOIDA members about the HOS rule. Nearly half of the drivers – 46 percent – reported that their fatigue increased after the rule went into effect, and 53 percent claimed no change in fatigue.

Safety impacts

In both surveys, respondents reported the HOS rule has negatively affected their safety. In ATRI’s survey, more than half of the drivers reported the new 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. sleep period requirement forces them onto the roads during hours of congested traffic when they begin a new week. Some drivers who participated in the OOIDA survey also claimed that they feel unsafe because they must drive faster to make up for lost time.

During a Nov. 21 House Small Business Committee hearing on the new HOS rule, Tilden Curl, a senior member of OOIDA and truck driver based in Olympia, WA, described the changes as a “catch-22” between safety and business efficiency. The changes, he said, put “professional truckers in a situation where they are at risk of being penalized by either enforcement officials or by the economic realities of the industry for stopping to rest, avoiding traffic or another hazard, or being delayed at a shipper or receiver.”

Several weeks prior, House lawmakers introduced a bill that would discontinue the new 34-hour restart restrictions, pending the results of an independent study. The bill, if passed, would direct the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on FMCSA’s rationale behind restricting the 34-hour restart. At press time, the bill had been referred to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee’s Highways and Transit Subcommittee.

NEWS BRIEFS

Safety belts required for select bus models by 2016

WASHINGTON – Many new motorcoaches and large buses will be required to have lap and shoulder belts in every seat beginning in late 2016, according to a final rule from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The rule will apply to all new over-the-road bus models, defined as any motorcoach with an elevated passenger deck situated over a baggage compartment, in addition to all new large bus models with a gross vehicle weight rat-



ing of 26,000 pounds or more. The final rule does not apply to transit or school buses.

According to NHTSA research cited in the final rule, lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatalities in large bus rollover crashes by 77 percent, primarily by helping prevent occupant ejections. The safety belts also have been found to be “highly effective” in reducing injuries in frontal crashes.

In a Nov. 20 press release, NHTSA encouraged organizations to voluntarily comply before the Nov. 28, 2016, deadline. The final rule fulfills a requirement in MAP-21, a 2012 surface transportation funding bill.

Visit <http://1.usa.gov/1ejISO8> to download the final rule.

FMCSA changing process for recording driver violation data

WASHINGTON – The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is changing how it records truck and bus driver safety violation data, allowing states to update certain violations or have them removed.

FMCSA currently requires states to report violations recorded during roadside inspections to FMCSA’s Motor Carrier Management Information System, which feeds data into other FMCSA databases that affect truck and bus driver employment prospects and carrier safety ratings.

If a state issues a citation as a result of the violation, the driver or carrier can appeal the citation with the state but the violation record remains in the MCMIS regardless of the outcome.

The changes will allow states to indicate whether a citation associated with a violation record was dismissed or resulted in a “not guilty” verdict, resulted in a conviction, or led to a conviction of a different or lesser charge. FMCSA then will update the violation record to reflect the citation appeal’s outcome.

According to the notice, the changes will go into effect for inspections that occur after the process’s implementation date, which had at press time not yet been established.

Screening CMV drivers for sleep apnea risk effective: study

BLOOMSBURG, PA – Adding an obstructive sleep apnea screening to commercial driver medical exams is effective at identifying OSA risk among truck and bus drivers, concludes a recent study from Bloomsburg University.

As part of the study, medical examiners screened 86 drivers without known

sleep disorders who were visiting an occupational health clinic for a medical fitness determination or redetermination. Adapting previously developed OSA screening recommendations, the examiners checked participants for known risk factors of OSA, such as those relating to body weight and neck circumference, before administering a survey about their sleeping habits.

Thirty-six percent of the drivers were found to be at risk for OSA and would have not been identified as at-risk using current medical exam guidelines, which do not specifically screen for OSA.

Truck and bus drivers with OSA, which is characterized by breathing pauses during sleep, may experience daytime sleepiness and other adverse effects. Researchers concluded that occupational health providers should voluntarily begin conducting OSA screenings during medical exams for truck and bus drivers.

The study was published online Oct. 23 in the journal *Workplace Health & Safety*.

Traffic Safety

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STATISTICS

October 2013 traffic deaths up 4 percent

By Kevin T. Fearn

Motor vehicle deaths in October 2013 totaled 3,260, up 4 percent from the October 2012 total.

Medically consulted motor vehicle injuries through October are estimated to be about 3.1 million, a decrease of 3 percent from 2012. Medically consulted injuries are not comparable to previous disabling injury estimates.

The cost of motor vehicle collisions through October is estimated to be about \$221.1 billion, a decrease of 4 percent from 2012. The costs include wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, employer costs, and vehicle damage.

The estimated annual population death rate is 11.0 deaths per 100,000 population, a decrease of 5 percent from the 2012 rate. The estimated annual mileage death rate is 1.2 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, unchanged from the 2012 rate.

Notes to table

Deaths are reported by state traffic authorities. All figures are preliminary. To ensure proper comparisons, 2011 and 2012 figures cover the same reporting period as those for 2013.

States shown in color had fewer deaths in 2013 than they did in 2012 for the same reporting period.

STATE MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS, CHANGES AND RATES UNITED STATES, TEN MONTHS, 2011-2013

| STATE | NO. OF MONTHS | DEATHS IDENTICAL PERIODS | | | PERCENT CHANGES | |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------------|
| | | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2012 TO 2013 | 2011 TO 2013 |
| TOTAL U.S. | 10 | 29,220 | 30,380 | 29,010 | -4% | 1% |
| Alabama | 10 | 691 | 701 | 707 | -1% | -2% |
| Alaska | 10 | 46 | 48 | 60 | -4% | -23% |
| Arizona | 10 | 714 | 705 | 655 | 1% | 9% |
| Arkansas | 10 | 398 | 450 | 472 | -12% | -16% |
| California | 9 | 2,218 | 2,216 | 2,081 | +*% | 7% |
| Colorado | 10 | 406 | 388 | 374 | 5% | 9% |
| Connecticut | 10 | 235 | 207 | 173 | 14% | 36% |
| Delaware | 10 | 84 | 90 | 87 | -7% | -3% |
| District of Columbia | 10 | 23 | 17 | 32 | 35% | -28% |
| Florida | 10 | 1,863 | 2,036 | 1,971 | -8% | -5% |
| Georgia | 10 | 954 | 972 | 929 | -2% | 3% |
| Hawaii | 9 | 80 | 101 | 79 | -21% | 1% |
| Idaho | 10 | 176 | 158 | 131 | 11% | 34% |
| Illinois | 10 | 845 | 814 | 775 | 4% | 9% |
| Indiana | 10 | 637 | 648 | 635 | -2% | +*% |
| Iowa | 9 | 232 | 278 | 255 | -17% | -9% |
| Kansas | 10 | 293 | 350 | 332 | -16% | -12% |
| Kentucky | 10 | 537 | 608 | 604 | -12% | -11% |
| Louisiana | 10 | 512 | 547 | 537 | -6% | -5% |
| Maine | 10 | 117 | 131 | 103 | -11% | 14% |
| Maryland | 10 | 374 | 404 | 372 | -7% | 1% |
| Massachusetts | 10 | 257 | 301 | 284 | -15% | -10% |
| Michigan | 10 | 793 | 794 | 711 | -*% | 12% |
| Minnesota | 9 | 286 | 275 | 244 | 4% | 17% |
| Mississippi | 10 | 476 | 470 | 546 | 1% | -13% |
| Missouri | 10 | 628 | 697 | 635 | -10% | -1% |
| Montana | 10 | 199 | 180 | 169 | 11% | 18% |
| Nebraska | 10 | 176 | 181 | 150 | -3% | 17% |
| Nevada | 10 | 216 | 215 | 205 | +*% | 5% |
| New Hampshire | 10 | 109 | 91 | 71 | 20% | 54% |
| New Jersey | 8 | 349 | 378 | 398 | -8% | -12% |
| New Mexico | 8 | 196 | 266 | 223 | -26% | -12% |
| New York | 1 | 43 | 42 | 46 | 2% | -7% |
| North Carolina | 10 | 1,033 | 1,069 | 1,017 | -3% | 2% |
| North Dakota | 10 | 114 | 136 | 109 | -16% | 5% |
| Ohio | 10 | 836 | 959 | 835 | -13% | +*% |
| Oklahoma | 10 | 511 | 534 | 559 | -4% | -9% |
| Oregon | 10 | 270 | 275 | 267 | -2% | 1% |
| Pennsylvania | 10 | 1,023 | 1,101 | 1,061 | -7% | -4% |
| Rhode Island | 10 | 53 | 59 | 56 | -10% | -5% |
| South Carolina | 10 | 634 | 687 | 696 | -8% | -9% |
| South Dakota | 10 | 111 | 110 | 93 | 1% | 19% |
| Tennessee | 10 | 854 | 841 | 800 | 2% | 7% |
| Texas | 10 | 2,793 | 2,719 | 2,404 | 3% | 16% |
| Utah | 9 | 156 | 155 | 172 | 1% | -9% |
| Vermont | 10 | 53 | 68 | 45 | -22% | 18% |
| Virginia | 10 | 600 | 643 | 636 | -7% | -6% |
| Washington | 9 | 317 | 331 | 341 | -4% | -7% |
| West Virginia | 10 | 282 | 291 | 280 | -3% | 1% |
| Wisconsin | 10 | 444 | 534 | 466 | -17% | -5% |
| Wyoming | 10 | 73 | 104 | 113 | -30% | -35% |

*Change less than 0.5 percent

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DRIVING TIPS

Ergo tips for long-haul truck drivers

Long-haul truck drivers sit for extended periods of time, which can place stress on the back. The back accounted for 35.5 percent of all musculoskeletal disorders among heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in 2011, followed by the shoulder at 16.4 percent and the legs at 14.1 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Also, compared to all other occupations that year, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers required the greatest median days away from work to recover from MSDs: 21 days.

To help reduce truck drivers' risk of MSDs, the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia released a video highlighting the importance of ergonomic health for truck drivers. The video suggests truck drivers:

- Recline the seat back to 90 degrees while still being able to safely reach the wheel and controls.
- Ensure the lower spine has adequate support, using a support device if necessary.
- Adjust mirrors to ensure they can be seen without slouching or twisting.
- Take a break to walk around at least every two hours of continuous sitting.



- Use the steps and keep both hands on the handrails when exiting the vehicle. Jumping out of the cab causes the body to absorb up to 8 times a person's body weight in force.

Truck drivers who experience severe back pain that does not improve over time should schedule an appointment with a medical professional. According to the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia, signs of a serious back injury include difficulty passing urine, unsteadiness, numbness, weakness, and feeling pins and needles in both legs.

Watch the video at <http://bit.ly/177Q06e>.