

Traffic Safety



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Trucking groups question study on safety benefits of electronic logging devices

A federally funded report issued in April found that electronic logging devices used to track truck drivers' compliance with federal hours-of-service regulations help prevent HOS violations and crashes. However, a professional trucking association has criticized the report and alleges that the devices do not fulfill the functions the government claims they do.

ELD study

In the study, funded by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, researchers from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute compared HOS violation rates and crash rates among 11 carriers with trucks that do and do not use ELDs.



They found that drivers of trucks equipped with the devices – previously referred to as electronic onboard recorders – were half as likely to violate HOS regulations, such as working longer than

the daily allowable limit or falsifying records. Trucks with the devices also had a 5 percent lower risk of being in a crash in which the driver was at fault, and had 11.7 percent fewer crashes for all crash types.

Researchers noted that although the study's findings were statistically significant, the data used was skewed toward larger carriers and may not represent the full U.S. trucking population. They recommended future studies that analyze trucks from more small and mid-sized carriers (those with fewer than 250 units in their fleets), as well as naturalistic studies that use video feeds for real-time tracking of drivers using the devices. They also recommended future studies that incorporate surveys and focus groups of drivers' perceptions of the devices.

Association responds

In a May 15 response, the Grain Valley, MO-based Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association criticized the study for its small sample size and, as FMCSA acknowledged, its overemphasis on large carriers. OOIDA, which represents the interests of independent truck drivers and small carriers, claimed that only two of the 11 carriers had fewer than 500 trucks in their fleets and had more than 100 trucks each. In comparison, 90 percent of all U.S. fleets have six trucks or fewer, OOIDA stated. The association alleged that the researchers were biased toward large operations by choosing only participants that had trucks with and without ELDs installed, instead of using smaller carriers that had ELDs on all trucks or no ELDs at all.

OOIDA also took issue with the types of crash data used in the study. Researchers used carrier-reported crash data, which may include incidents that normally would not have been driving-related, such as collisions between trucks in the fleet's parking lot. OOIDA stated that the researchers should have used only crashes that are Department of Transportation-recordable in the analysis, such as those that resulted in a fatality, serious injury requiring medical attention or the vehicle being towed. If the researchers analyzed only those crashes, the ELDs would not have shown a significant difference in the number of total crashes or fatigued-related crashes. OOIDA concluded that the study's claims that ELDs reduce fatigue and crashes among truck drivers are invalid.

Go to <http://1.usa.gov/lofz0ZR> to download the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration report, and <http://bit.ly/1o5KBLA> to download the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association's review of the report.

NEWS BRIEFS

Electronic signatures OK for records of duty status: FMCSA

WASHINGTON – Truck drivers who use laptops, tablets or smartphones to update their records of duty status no longer will have to print and sign paper copies of the documents, according to new regulatory guidance from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

However, truck drivers who abandon the print-and-sign option must be able to sign the records of duty status electronically at the end of each workday. They also must maintain signed electronic records for the previous seven days and be able to display the records on their device during roadside inspections by enforcement officials.

The new guidance took effect July 10. It follows 2011 guidance in which FMCSA outlined how electronic signatures could be used while the agency considered a formal rulemaking.

Although FMCSA's latest guidance cleared the way for long-term use of electronic signatures, laptops, tablets and smartphones with logging software programs still do not meet federal requirements for automatic on-board recording devices, FMCSA said.



Obama nominates Hart to lead NTSB

WASHINGTON – At press time, President Barack Obama had nominated Christopher Hart for a two-year term as chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

Hart has been with NTSB since 2009, serving as a board member and vice chairman. He has served as acting chairman since late April, when former chief Deborah A.P. Hersman resigned to become president and CEO of the National Safety Council.

Before joining NTSB, Hart spent more than a decade with the Federal Aviation Administration. He was the assistant administrator for system safety from 1995 to 2005, and deputy director for air traffic safety oversight from 2005 to 2009. He also served as a member of NTSB from 1990 to 1993 after beginning his career as an attorney.

Hart is a licensed pilot with commercial, multi-engine and instrument ratings. His great uncle, James Herman Banning, was the first African-American to receive a pilot's license from the U.S. government, in 1926.

Senate pulls bill with hours-of-service restart suspension

WASHINGTON – At press time, a bill that includes an amendment to suspend hours-of-service restart provisions for truck drivers had been pulled from the Senate floor.

The amendment, which was introduced by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 5, sought to suspend (pending further research) a once-per-week restriction on drivers "resetting"

their weekly driving hours by taking 34 consecutive hours off. The amendment also would have suspended the requirement that the 34-hour restart include two rest periods between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

The Senate's decision to pull the bill on June 19 followed resistance from Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), who has offered an amendment to reverse Collins' efforts to suspend the restart changes.

"At a time when truck crashes are actually on a rise in the United States of America, it is paramount that Congress do more to improve transportation safety, to improve the protection of lives – not remove an evidence-based element of reform," Booker said.

Several groups, including the American Trucking Associations, expressed disappointment with the Senate's decision to pull the bill from the floor. ATA has said Collins' amendment would improve safety by preventing a high number of trucks from hitting the road after 5 a.m., when many motorists are beginning their commutes.

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STATISTICS

May traffic deaths up 2 percent

By Kevin T. Fearn

Motor vehicle deaths in May totaled 3,110, up 2 percent from the May 2013 total.

Medically consulted motor vehicle injuries through May are estimated to be about 1.4 million, a decrease of 3 percent from 2013. Medically consulted injuries are not comparable to previous disabling injury estimates.

The cost of motor vehicle collisions through May is estimated to be about \$99.8 billion, a decrease of 3 percent from 2013. The costs include wage and productivity losses, medical expenses, administrative expenses, employer costs, and vehicle damage.

The estimated annual population death rate is 10.8 deaths per 100,000 population, a decrease of 3 percent from the preliminary 2013 rate of 11.1. The estimated annual mileage death rate is 1.2 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, unchanged from the preliminary 2013 rate.

Notes to table

Deaths are reported by state traffic authorities. All figures are preliminary. To ensure proper comparisons, 2012 and 2013 figures cover the same reporting period as those for 2014.

States shown in color had fewer deaths in 2014 than they did in 2013 for the same reporting period.

STATE MOTOR VEHICLE DEATHS, CHANGES AND RATES UNITED STATES, FIVE MONTHS, 2012-2014

STATE	NO. OF MONTHS	DEATHS IDENTICAL PERIODS			PERCENT CHANGES	
		2014	2013	2012	2013 TO 2014	2012 TO 2014
TOTAL U.S.	5	13,130	13,670	14,370	-4%	-9%
Alabama	5	352	331	324	6%	9%
Alaska	5	25	17	16	47%	56%
Arizona	5	304	353	357	-14%	-15%
Arkansas	5	152	194	210	-22%	-28%
California	4	810	986	947	-18%	-14%
Colorado	5	150	153	161	-2%	-7%
Connecticut	5	88	88	98	0%	-10%
Delaware	5	52	34	37	53%	41%
District of Columbia	5	11	16	7	-31%	57%
Florida	5	950	1,003	1,083	-5%	-12%
Georgia	5	427	475	451	-10%	-5%
Hawaii	5	45	53	50	-15%	-10%
Idaho	5	52	59	66	-12%	-21%
Illinois	5	327	389	376	-16%	-13%
Indiana	5	226	282	269	-20%	-16%
Iowa	5	107	108	154	-1%	-31%
Kansas	5	151	126	146	20%	3%
Kentucky	5	235	236	303	-*%	-22%
Louisiana	5	220	267	289	-18%	-24%
Maine	5	47	42	49	12%	-4%
Maryland	5	151	166	183	-9%	-17%
Massachusetts	5	114	92	146	24%	-22%
Michigan	5	317	309	341	3%	-7%
Minnesota	5	118	121	111	-2%	6%
Mississippi	2	63	77	66	-18%	-5%
Missouri	5	284	250	323	14%	-12%
Montana	5	56	79	62	-29%	-10%
Nebraska	5	83	73	66	14%	26%
Nevada	4	79	94	89	-16%	-11%
New Hampshire	4	20	33	25	-39%	-20%
New Jersey	0	-	-	-	-	-
New Mexico	5	133	120	158	11%	-16%
New York	0	-	-	-	-	-
North Carolina	5	431	489	416	-12%	4%
North Dakota	5	39	49	49	-20%	-20%
Ohio	5	347	350	430	-1%	-19%
Oklahoma	5	256	209	244	22%	5%
Oregon	4	87	76	86	14%	1%
Pennsylvania	5	411	447	510	-8%	-19%
Rhode Island	5	18	17	27	6%	-33%
South Carolina	5	293	281	343	4%	-15%
South Dakota	5	57	37	34	54%	68%
Tennessee	5	360	364	408	-1%	-12%
Texas	5	1,370	1,338	1,208	2%	13%
Utah	5	72	60	77	20%	-6%
Vermont	5	13	20	34	-35%	-62%
Virginia	5	260	283	289	-8%	-10%
Washington	5	192	158	155	22%	24%
West Virginia	5	82	120	110	-32%	-25%
Wisconsin	5	166	166	205	0%	-19%
Wyoming	5	53	38	42	39%	26%

* Less than 0.5%.

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Publisher

Suzanne Powills, suzanne.powills@nsc.org

Editor

Melissa J. Ruminski, melissa.ruminski@nsc.org

Copy Editor

Bryan O'Donnell, bryan.o'donnell@nsc.org

Managing Editor

Jennifer Yario, jennifer.yario@nsc.org

Assistant Editor

Tracy Haas, tracy.haas@nsc.org

Senior Associate Editor

Kyle W. Morrison, kyle.morrison@nsc.org

Associate Editors

Thomas J. Bukowski
Tom Musick, tom.musick@nsc.org
Sarah Trotto, sarah.trotto@nsc.org

Senior Graphic Designer

Ian Palmer

Circulation

Christy Maes, christy.maes@nsc.org

Online Content Manager

Amy Bellinger

Production Coordinator

Joy Tan-Pipilas

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DRIVING TIPS

Beware of glare

Glare is a common hazard that truck and bus drivers face on the roads – whether from the sun, camera flashes or high beam headlights on an oncoming vehicle. It also can be very dangerous: According to the Texas Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers Handbook, drivers can be blinded for a few seconds or longer by common



sources of glare. A truck or bus driver traveling at average highway speeds will cross half the distance of a football field by the time he or she can recover from the glare.

Older drivers are more susceptible to the effects of glare, the handbook states. The Texas Department of Public

Safety recommends the following tips for avoiding or dealing with glare when driving:

- Do not look directly at bright sources of light.
- Look at the edge marking or slightly to the right of the right lane when approaching a vehicle that is using high beams.
- Refrain from switching your high beams on and off to send a message to drivers who are using their high beams, as this increases glare for other drivers.
- When using high beams, dim them within 500 feet of oncoming vehicles and within 300 feet of vehicles you are following.
- Keep the inside and outside of the windshield, as well as mirror surfaces, clear of dirt or other debris, which can make glare from the sun more intense.
- Be prepared for the glare from the sun to be more intense when it is about to rise or set. Glare from the sun at these times of day can obscure your view from traffic control devices or roadway signs.