

**REMARKS FROM
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FMCSA Administrator**

**Press Conference
Electronic On-Board Recorders
Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

Washington, DC**

January 11, 2007

Good morning.

There are many important issues that the transportation community must confront these days – including congestion, funding, and an aging infrastructure. But even as priorities change and transportation needs evolve, safety on our roads must remain paramount to all priorities.

Safety is our top priority at the Department of Transportation. And perhaps the most important influence on improving road safety in the future rests with technology. By integrating smart technologies like on-board safety devices, we will improve safety in the trucking and motorcoach industries.

For many years, the transportation community has focused on fighting driver fatigue as a way to make our roads safer. And today we take another step toward reducing hours-of-service violations, which will make

sure drivers are getting the proper rest before getting behind the wheel.

Initially prompted by a desire to improve efficiency, the motor carrier industry began looking to automated methods for recording drivers' duty status over 20 years ago. In the late 80's, we saw the first rules allowing the use of automatic on-board recording devices, and since 2000, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has been exploring the issue further – including whether or not it should be mandatory and analyzing proper design, use, costs and benefits.

Today I am pleased to say that we have a proposed rule that outlines the use of electronic on board recorders by targeting the worst offenders, encouraging safe companies to improve further by using this technology, and setting realistic performance-based standards.

In all our enforcement activities, we make it top priority to focus on those companies who are most likely to be a safety hazard on the road. That is why under this proposed rule, truck and bus companies with a history of serious hours-of-service violations will be required to install electronic on-board recorders in all of their commercial vehicles for a minimum of two years. Within the first two years that the rule would be enforced, we estimate that about 930 carriers with 17,500 drivers would fall under this requirement.

There are hundreds of thousands of trucks and buses on America's roads today. So, we have to find other ways to get more of these units on more vehicles, without creating an unreasonable burden with a government mandate. This is why the proposed rule would also encourage industry-wide use of EOBRs by providing incentives for voluntary use.

Incentives include the examination of a random sample of drivers' records of duty status as part of a

company compliance review and partial relief from HOS supporting documents requirements. We welcome suggestions from the public for additional incentives that can help encourage more widespread use of this safety technology.

The technical element of the proposed rule will help standardize the technology for industry-wide use. This portion of the rule would require EOBRs to record basic information needed to track a driver's duty status, including: identity of the driver, duty status, date, time and location of the commercial vehicle, and distance traveled. It would also add a new requirement to use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology or other location tracking systems to automatically identify the location of the vehicle, which further reduces the likelihood of falsification of HOS information.

On-board HOS recording devices that are installed in commercial vehicles manufactured on or

after two years from the effective date of a final rule would have to meet these new technical requirements. But, EOBRs voluntarily installed before that time would be allowed to continue for the life of the vehicle.

Here is one example of what the display of an EOBR unit might look like. Currently, a driver has to provide a roadside officer with a printout or the officer must physically climb into the cab to read the screen. Our proposed technical specifications would dramatically improve the ease and convenience of using these devices as a safety tool.

First, there would be standard display of specific data fields. So no matter where you are or which manufacturer's device you are using, every read-out and display would be in an identical format. Additionally, the technology will have to support the ability to be downloaded – either by hard wire or wireless transmission.

By updating the technology standards we can make the best use of modern and efficient communications. Uniformity will also help drivers and law enforcement know how to use these devices regardless of which manufacturer or model they are using.

While this technology is at our disposal, we must always remember that it is just another tool to ensure safe driver behavior. Drivers must also follow the hours-of-service rules - which protect them and protect those with whom they share the road. Electronic On-Board Recorders will help ensure that these important rules are followed.

I am happy to take any questions at this time.