

Remarks by Bill Bronrott
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Surface Transportation Reauthorization Outreach Tour
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Introduction

- Thank you, Jack. On behalf of FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro, thank you for this opportunity to join you today.
- We agree that the American people deserve a world class, second-to-none balanced transportation system – a nationwide network that moves people and products safely and efficiently.

Safety Focus

- Our mission at the Federal Motor Carrier **Safety** Administration is just that -- **safety**. The safety of trucks and motorcoaches, the safety of those who are behind the wheel, and those who share the road with them.
 - FMCSA is dedicated to eliminating crashes, fatalities and injuries involving large trucks and buses.
 - In 2008 alone, 4229 people were killed and about 100,000 others were injured in crashes involving large trucks in the U.S. That's 13 deaths and 274 injuries day in and day out.

- Nearly 2 of every 10 of these deaths were occupants of big rigs.
- Some might think of these as mere accidents or a matter of bad luck or fate. We say they are **preventable** incidents.
- One death or injury is one too many.

Rural Truck Crashes

- We are especially concerned about rural road safety because over 50 percent of all fatal crashes occur on rural roads while only 25 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas.
 - Common characteristics of rural road crashes are:
 - More excessive speeding
 - More alcohol-drug impairment
 - Less frequent seat belt use

North Dakota Truck Crashes

- In North Dakota in 2008:
 - 20 people died as a result of crashes involving large trucks.
 - 9 out of 10 fatal crashes involving large trucks took place on rural roadways.
 - The most frequent factors were:
 - Excessive speed
 - Failure to keep in the proper lane, and
 - Inattentive or distracted driving.

- Along with this tragic loss of life and limb, are the enormous economic costs borne by a state and its taxpayers. Based on the national average cost of large truck crashes, deaths and injuries in truck crashes cost North Dakota an estimated \$200 million over each of the past five years. This points to the need for more action at every level of government to prevent crashes from happening in the first place -- not only because it's the socially responsible thing to do, but also because it is fiscally prudent for cash strapped states and an overburdened health and medical system.

That is why safety is FMCSA's and US DOT's #1 priority, and we are committed to working with you to dramatically reduce this unacceptable death and injury toll.

FMCSA Core Principles

- In meeting the challenges of our safety mission, FMCSA Administrator Ferro has laid out a strategic focus shaped by three core principles:
 - The first is to raise the safety bar to enter the motor carrier industry.

- FMCSA recently strengthened the new entrant safety assurance program to identify start-up truck and bus companies' deficient in key areas.
 - FMCSA has implemented a vetting program to weed out unsafe motor coach and household goods carriers who reincarnate to avoid sanctions.
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- The second principle is to maintain high safety standards to remain in the industry.
 - Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 or CSA 2010 is our agency's new safety fitness determination and compliance program that is designed to accelerate corrections to safety problems before crashes occur.
 - FMCSA is in the midst of a new rulemaking on **Hours of Service** that defines how long commercial truck drivers may drive and be on-duty.
 - Earlier this year FMCSA published a final rule that will require carriers with serious patterns of hours of service violations to install electronic on-board recorders on all of their commercial motor vehicles.
 - Later this year we will issue a proposal to require more carriers to install and use EOBRs.

- And, our third core principle is to **remove** high risk behaviors and operators from operating.
 - FMCSA and the entire US DOT have taken an aggressive stance on distracted driving. To this end, FMCSA has issued a proposed rule to ban texting for commercial motor vehicle drivers. We will soon follow with a proposed rule on cell phone use.
 - As Secretary LaHood has repeatedly said, talking or texting while driving is a recipe for disaster on our nation's highways. Drivers simply cannot do two things at once.
- To meet the safety challenges in a rural environment, we must move forward on all three principles of our safety mission and all programs that reinforce them.

Reauthorization Outlook/Conclusion

- As we prepare for reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program, FMCSA believes that future federal resources should focus on assisting states to achieve the highest level of commercial vehicle enforcement.
 - FMCSA is eager to work closely in partnership with you – most especially to enhance rural road safety.

- The fact is, our agency is very much field oriented. That's where most of our workforce can be found. Our work comes together at the roadside with our state partners and in our division offices.
 - In Fiscal Year 2009, state inspectors conducted 14,706 roadside truck and bus inspections in North Dakota.
 - This is a reflection of our strong sense of urgency to set the safety bar high for the motor carrier industry. We know that safe trucks, buses and drivers go hand in hand with US DOT's other top priorities:
 - A transportation system in a state of good repair;
 - Economic competitiveness;
 - Environmental sustainability; and
 - Livable communities.

On behalf of FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro and our agency's dedicated workforce, thank you for this timely opportunity to join you here today – and to listen and learn from you. Let us work together as if our lives depend on it – because they do.