

Remarks by Anne S. Ferro
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Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to speak about how the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration advances roadway safety across our nation and what that means to you.

Trucking is a vibrant industry. It's a leading indicator of our nation's economic health with 70 percent of the tonnage carried by all modes of domestic freight transportation and for 71 percent of the value.

The industry has a long history of federal regulation, dating back to the 1930's. For most of that history, the focus was on economic factors and in recent years, safety. In fact, FMCSA was established by Congress 11 years ago with a single mission: the safety of commercial motor vehicles, the safety of those behind the wheel, and the safety of those who share the road with them: the travelling public.

As an agency, we regulate more than 500,000 trucking companies and some 4,000 interstate bus companies. We oversee the physical qualification standards and the drug and alcohol testing requirements covering some 10-12 million commercial driver license holders. In short, we work to ensure the safety compliance of millions of truck and bus drivers.

Going forward, how we do it is driven by effective use of limited resources to raise the bar ensure high standards are maintained and to take high risk carriers and drivers off the road.

FMCSA Core Principles

To do this, we are strategically focused on three core principles: One is to raise the safety bar to enter the motor carrier industry; two, is to maintain high safety standards to remain in the industry. And our third core principle is to remove high risk drivers and carriers from operating. Everything we do is linked to one or more of these principles.

Some people feel that to be competitive in the trucking industry, safety takes a back seat. My message to you is this: safety drives competitiveness or to put it another way: safety IS good business.

Consider this: the annual cost of commercial vehicle crashes to society is over \$60 billion – over \$7 million for EACH fatal crash alone. That cost includes medical costs, emergency services costs, lost productivity and pain and suffering. And you know all too well the costs of a crash to your operations, to your productivity, and the impact on the families of your drivers when they are injured or worse.

You also appreciate how a high profile crash can impact your reputation and your ability to compete for new customers.

Rulemakings

Rulemakings are a central component to how we achieve our safety mission. They come about for one reason only: safety. They improve safety. The winners are everyone who travels on our highways and roads.

Rulemakings should NOT be thoughts of as an obstacle to the carrier's ability to succeed in business. Rather, by adopting a safety culture, the safety rules are as close to a guarantee as there is that you'll *succeed* in business.

Safety is the number one priority of the Department of Transportation. Secretary LaHood has said many times, "When it comes to safety, we will NOT take a back seat to ANYONE."

That is why we published a record 17 rulemakings for our young agency last year alone.

This year we will be working on proposals for rulemakings that strengthen national standards for driver training; new medical guidelines surrounding CDL holders diagnosed with diabetes; and a new national registry of certified medical practitioners who will be required to complete specialized training and gain certifications in order to conduct physical exams of drivers.

Late last year, we published several high-profile rulemakings. A couple of these rules focused on distracted driving, which I will highlight in a minute.

Another one, still open for public comment, is a proposed rulemaking for driver's hours of service.

This proposal would revise current hours-of-service rules by requiring truck drivers to complete all driving within a 14-hour workday and to complete all on duty work-related activities within 13 hours. The proposal also leaves open for comment whether or not drivers should be limited to 10 or 11 hours of daily driving time.

The idea is to create a driving environment where drivers are rested, alert and focused on safety.

As a continuation of the sessions held last year, we are holding another one to receive your comments. It is this Thursday, February 17, in Arlington, Virginia. If you can't join us in person, go online at www.fmcsa.dot.gov and participate by live webcast. All public comments are due February 28.

Also, late last month we published a proposed rule that will require installation of electronic on-board recorders or EOBRs in many more trucks and buses. This proposal is an important step in our efforts to raise the safety bar for carriers and drivers.

We believe broader use of EOBRs would give carriers and drivers an effective tool to strengthen their hours of service compliance. Comments on this proposal are due April 4.

Understanding CSA

Another priority is the continued phased roll-out of our CSA initiative. CSA stands for Compliance, Safety and Accountability and is our centerpiece safety enforcement program.

Under CSA's measurement system, we now evaluate seven areas of safety performance. These areas include: unsafe driving; fatigue or hours of service compliance; driver fitness; controlled substances and alcohol; vehicle maintenance; cargo security, and crash history.

By looking at all safety violations, and grouping them into detailed categories, we will have a more accurate and informative picture of the overall safety of a truck or bus company.

CSA is preventative medicine – it's about interventions to encourage corrective actions before crashes can ever happen.

We encourage trucking and bus industries to think of CSA as a tool to do more than get to compliance – it's about going beyond compliance; because compliance should be thought of as the minimum standard for safety.

Beginning early this year, warning letters will be issued to carriers whose safety performance data indicates that they are falling short in complying with FMCSA safety regulations.

If a carrier receives a warning letter, we first ask them to check their data to ensure its accuracy and then examine the violations in depth. Second, we urge carriers to understand what their safety assessment means in terms of percentiles and alerts. Third, and most important, we want carriers who receive warning letters to take action now to improve safety performance.

Also, last year, FMCSA launched a CMV driver Pre-Employment Screening Program. The purpose of PSP is to provide a portal for truck and bus companies to electronically access driver safety inspection and crash records from FMCSA's national database BEFORE hiring a driver. This program is a valuable tool in the driver hiring process.

Take advantage of PSP so that only the safest drivers are hired. It helps you to avoid crashes, disruptions to your operations and impacts upon your business viability and profitability.

There are tremendous benefits to these rulemaking proposals and CSA. Unsafe behavior will be closely monitored. Bad drivers and bad carriers will be taken off the road. All that is good business practice. Unsafe behavior can't and shouldn't be rewarded. The traveling public must be protected from unsafe drivers and carriers.

Distracted Driving Initiatives

Taking the lead from Secretary LaHood, we are addressing the nation's distracted driving crisis. FMCSA issued a final rule in October 2010 that bans commercial bus and truck drivers from texting on the job.

Just before New Year's, we issued a new proposed rule that would prohibit interstate commercial truck and bus drivers from using hand-held cell phones while driving. Initial public comments must be received by February 22 while the last day for providing a reply comment is March 21.

Distracted driving is a deadly epidemic. It's in everyone's interest to curb bad driving behaviors. We believe this proposal will go a long way toward keeping a driver's full attention focused on the road.

Driver Medical Programs

A longstanding concern within the motor carrier industry has been CMV driver health and wellness. FMCSA has long recognized that when a truck or bus is in operation, the responsibility for safety rests with the driver.

Keeping commercial drivers healthy and focused on safety so they can do their jobs has been an area in which we feel strongly that more can be done.

FMCSA recently convened an international conference on the nature of commercial driver health. We heard the latest information on the success of health and wellness programs and how these programs can be good for a business' balance sheet and improve safety. A win-win. And the bottom line is that better health means safer roads for every traveler.

We encourage carriers and investors alike to make driver health and wellness a focus of their business. Invest in companies that invest in their drivers. Do your homework and find out which carriers raise the bar for good health.

Good business means healthy and attentive drivers. Everyone – carriers, investors, shippers and insurers should look at what can be done to improve safety.

Conclusion

In his State of the Union address, President Obama laid out a plan to win the future by out-innovating, out-building and out-educating the rest of the world.

The President called on the nation to repair our existing infrastructure and build new ways to move people, goods and information. For our part, FMCSA faces big challenges in meeting our safety mission. We can't do it in absence of industry involvement. We are in this together.

As Robert Kennedy told us, “The future is NOT a gift. It is an achievement.” As President Obama said, “Sustaining the American Dream has never been about standing pat. It has required each generation to sacrifice, and struggle and meet the demands of a new age. And now, it’s our turn. We need to out-innovate, out-educate and out-build the rest of the world.” To do that, we need the safest transportation system in the world to support us.

FMCSA is up to the challenge. I ask you to join us. So, let’s dream big, and not settle for anything less. Thank you. I’ll be happy to answer your questions later in the program.

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