

Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee (MCSAC) Discussion Notes for Task 20-2: The Impact of Aging Drivers on CMV Operations

The Agency requested that the MCSAC provide feedback to the Agency regarding the aging demographic of the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver workforce on the truck and bus industries and whether this trend will exacerbate driver shortages. The committee discussed the challenges associated with this aging workforce and what could be done about these challenges. Additionally, the committee considered data to evaluate what should be done to ensure that the highest level of safety be maintained and considered strategies that the industry and others could adopt to maximize recruitment and retention efforts.

I. Discussion About the Impact of Aging Drivers on CMV Operations

- A. A Virginia Tech Transportation Institute's study, *CMV Driver Crash Risk Based on Age and Driving Experience*, published in April 2020, concluded that driving experience, rather than age, had a greater impact on driving risk.
- B. The study found no safety-based reason NOT to use younger drivers when structured training, mentoring and coaching systems are in place.
- C. Susan Soccolich said the effectiveness of mentoring drivers from the 21-24 age group and gender were not part of the research, but these factors are under consideration for future research.
- D. VTTI's research may be misleading to motor carriers who are looking for guidance on hiring younger drivers (ages 18-20). These younger drivers do not have much experience, which raises safety concerns.
- E. More research is needed with a larger population to determine the average age of those requesting medical certificates and to identify trends in aging and new drivers.

II. General Discussion

- A. The assertion that younger drivers are not more dangerous is interesting.
- B. A committee member suggested that there is not a driver shortage because "every load that needs to move is moving on a consistent basis."
- C. Under the current compensation scheme for commercial drivers more mileage equates to more money, which puts tremendous pressure on drivers to overwork. This can correlate with increased safety risk.
- D. If driver income was based on hours worked rather than miles driven, would there be less turnover in the profession? This is a great question for drivers.
- E. It would be helpful to obtain information from other carriers, labor unions, or organizations that have effective apprenticeship and training programs, to see what they are doing well.
- F. Industry and regulations can help make the occupation more attractive and rewarding.
- G. Scott Grenerth said, the Agency's focus should be on better prepared drivers, rather than age groups or new entrants.
- H. The amount of tenure has a big impact on safety. More work is needed on retention, especially for those in the middle age group.

- I. Retention is not always related to pay. Reasons for leaving the industry may include company and health benefits, career development, and technology advancements.
- J. The increase and timing of autonomous vehicle use will coincide with a large percentage of driver retirements. It may cause people to rethink joining the industry, because they may be replaced by autonomous vehicles.
- K. Drivers tend to have lower than average life expectancy because of their lifestyle related to their job and other underlying health conditions.
- L. Age versus safety performance data is an inverted bell curve. More things can be done to help manage the safety risks for younger and aging drivers.

III. Action Items

- A. Data Requests:
 - a. Query the National Registry Database for the number of new drivers entering the CMV driver industry (those applying for and renewing medical certificates).
 - b. Obtain data from Departments of Motor Vehicles and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administration for the number of drivers leaving and retiring annually.
 - c. Obtain data from truck driving schools and the National Transit Institute for the average age of the workforce, to analyze trends.
- B. Identify the number of drivers by CDL type, vehicle type, industry segment, and carrier size, then compare them to the rest of the population of trucks requiring the same class license.
- C. Identify 9 States that can provide intrastate data on new drivers entering the industry, drivers leaving and retiring, the average age of the workforce, with specifics on each State and how they collected the data.
- D. Discuss ways to increase retention in the trucking occupation and attract younger drivers to the profession.
 - a. Share best practices from low turnover fleets.
 - b. Propose an evaluation/exit interview, to determine why drivers leave.
 - c. Seek ways to incentivize drivers and companies such as those with greater experience, who abide by safety and performance standards, and have good driving records to aid retention.
 - d. Review and prioritize challenges such as adequate truck parking for drivers who need to rest.
 - e. Identify and address issues such as health challenges, apprenticeship programs, and compensation packages to help attract younger drivers and make the profession more appealing.
- E. Discuss how to normalize risk vs. outcomes, and countermeasures to help increase driver performance.

IV. Conclusion

- A. The committee will continue deliberations on this task at its next meeting.