

**Remarks by Anne S. Ferro
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California Trucking Association
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Introduction

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for inviting me to join you today.

I am delighted to give an overview of FMCSA's progress in our safety-first agenda. I know we share a vision of making our transportation system safer because safer roads support a strong economy and prosperity for all.

I want to extend a special thank you to Mike Campbell for your association's partnership in safety. With 3,600 members representing 350,000 trucks, this group that has shown a tremendous amount of leadership, particularly in communicating the rollout of FMCSA's new safety enforcement initiative, Compliance Safety, Accountability or CSA, to such a large membership.

Your conference theme of "Back to the Basics" has never been truer for the trucking industry. It reminds all of us of our obligation and commitment to perform our jobs to the best of our abilities and to take actions that help drivers stay safe. In doing so, you keep your industry strong. Strong businesses are among the highest priorities of President Obama and safe highways are the number one priority of the Department of Transportation.

Safety-First Mission

Americans expect an efficient, reliable and safe transportation system that includes trucks. FMCSA's role is to work with you to meet that expectation.

We have framed our agency's mission using three core principles: The first is to raise the safety bar to enter the industry; two – to maintain a high safety standard to remain in the industry; and the third is – to remove high-risk carriers, drivers and vehicles from operating. Everything we do can be tied back to one or more of these principles.

FMCSA Safety Initiatives

An important way we work to achieve the basics of our safety mission is through our CSA initiative.

CSA is our centerpiece safety enforcement program. Under CSA's measurement system, we evaluate seven areas of safety performance which we call BASICS. These BASICS include unsafe driving, fatigued driving, driver fitness, controlled substances and alcohol, vehicle maintenance, cargo-related and crashes. By looking at all of the safety violations, not just out-of-service violations, and grouping them into more detailed categories related to unsafe behavior, FMCSA will have a better picture of the overall safety of a carrier.

CSA is performance data that helps you and us to more readily identify safety compliance problems and apply more efficient interventions to correct them.

It also means FMCSA and our state partners are now routinely conducting more efficient, focused – onsite compliance reviews rather than a full compliance review every time.

We are closer to getting at the *why* of a problem instead of just the *what*.

In February, we are slated to begin the process of issuing warning letters to carriers based on their status in the new safety measurement system.

We are turning our attention to the second phase of CSA's roll out which will take place in late summer to early fall this year. During that time frame, we plan to publish a safety fitness determination notice of proposed rulemaking.

Through this rulemaking, FMCSA would establish safety fitness determinations based on safety data consisting of crashes, inspections and violation history rather than the standards compliance review. Also, later part of this year, we will introduce the remaining interventions to every state.

CSA is about "back to the basics." It's about being accountable for good safety performance.

To help you ensure you are selecting the best drivers, FMCSA launched a driver pre-employment screening program. If you haven't already, I hope you will take advantage of the program's ability to electronically access driver safety inspection and crash records from our national database

BEFORE hiring a driver. Hiring the safest drivers creates a good framework for delivering on what is important for your business – safety.

Following on the theme of giving you the tools to stay safe, over the next several years we are closing the loopholes on medical certification and drug/alcohol testing.

Rulemakings

Rulemakings are an important part of how we meet our safety mission to make sure motor carriers are operating on a level playing field.

Late last year, we published several high-profile rulemakings which are now open for public comment.

The first is a proposed regulation for hours of service. This proposal would revise current hours-of-service-requirements by calling for drivers to complete all driving within a 14-hour workday and to complete all on duty work-related activities within 13 hours.

Drivers would take a break of at least 30 minutes after seven consecutive hours of on-duty time before continuing a trip.

The proposal also leaves open for comment whether or not drivers should be limited to 10 or 11 hours of daily driving time. Public comments are due by February 28. You can send them online, by fax, mail or delivered by hand. See the FMCSA web site www.fmcsa.dot.gov for all you need to know about how to submit your comments.

Another proposed rulemaking published late last year would ban handheld cell phone use for drivers. This proposed rule would build on our existing ban on texting behind the wheel. California has been ahead of most states on this important move to end distracted driving.

Distracted driving is a deadly epidemic and we believe that this action would go a long way toward keeping a driver's full attention focused on the road.

FMCSA is providing 60 days for the normal public comment period for this rulemaking and 30 days for a reply comment period. Initial public comments must be received by February 22 while the last day for making comments during the reply comment period is March 21.

Also, we will soon propose a rule that will require installation of electronic on-board recorders in many more vehicles.

We welcome your comments and counsel on each of these proposals.

In 2011, we are continuing work on rulemaking actions that address commercial driver's license standards, entry-level driver training; driver physical qualifications; and standardize training and testing on the federal physical qualifications standards for all medical professionals who conduct physical examinations for interstate commercial motor vehicle drivers.

All of these initiatives focus back on our core principles: to raise the bar to enter the motor carrier industry; maintain high safety standards to remain in the industry and remove high risk behaviors and operators from operating.

It can't be more basic that making sure drivers are physically alert, have their eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel.

Cross Border Trucking Program

As many of you have heard two weeks ago that Secretary LaHood presented an initial concept document for a long haul cross border Mexican Trucking program.

This program makes safety a number one priority. It will deliver job growth and economic opportunity at home and satisfy our country's international obligations. You will see a formal proposal in the coming months and have opportunity to comment. So, stay tuned.

In the meantime, please know that we are working to ensure that Mexican trucks on American roadways are held to rigorous safety standards – just as American trucks are.

Reauthorization

Finally, I'd like to mention where FMCSA stands with respect to our long-term programs and funding by Congress. We currently operate under a Continuing Resolution and an extension of our last long-term funding bill which both run through March 4. The last long-term bill that established our agency's enforcement authority, grants to states for roadside enforcement of motor carriers, expired in September 2009.

On Labor Day, President Obama proposed a robust six-year “reauthorization” proposal to provide new funding for all federal highway and transit programs and which FMCSA is a part. The proposal includes an upfront \$50 billion investment to help employ the nearly one-in-five construction workers who are still out of a job at a time when so many of the roads and bridges we use every day have fallen into disrepair.

The President’s proposal also calls for a National Infrastructure Bank, which will leverage private investment dollars and finance transportation innovations that are regional or national in scope.

This proposal will improve the condition of our nation’s roads and making travel and freight management more efficient and safer.

The Secretary’s goal is to have a long-term bill through Congress and on President Obama’s desk and signed by the August recess. Obviously, with the change in House leadership and increasing debate about spending, the Department faces more than a few hurdles.

That said, transportation policy was one area where Members of both parties joined together in the common good. Secretary LaHood has met with both Speaker Boehner from Ohio and Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Mica from Florida, and he’s optimistic that the Department and Congressional leaders can work together in the weeks and months ahead.

For the 112th Congress, membership on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has been decided this past week and includes three members from each party who represent your state very well.

Investing in our transportation infrastructure is about jobs ... it's about our economy ... and it's about safety. It couldn't be more important.

Reauthorization also presents an opportunity for bipartisanship on a very nonpartisan issue – highway safety.

Conclusion

As I wrap up, I'd like to repeat what Secretary LaHood has said many times about safety, our Department's number one priority. He has said, "When it comes to safety, we will not take a back seat to ANYONE."

Getting back to the basics is not complicated: it's about setting simple priorities to make trucking the safest it can be, so that our economy can prosper and traveling is safer for everyone.

I'm confident that by working together, we'll strengthen the safety of America's roads and highways because Americans deserve no less.

Thank you all.