



## MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

C/O: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Room W64-232  
Washington, DC 20590

August 30, 2010

The Honorable Anne S. Ferro  
Administrator  
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Ferro:

The Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee (MCSAC) accepted Task 10-02 at its June 2010 meeting. The Committee was tasked with providing specific ideas, concepts, and information the Agency might consider in addressing the safety risk posed by in-cab distractions other than texting and cell phone use by CMV drivers in interstate commerce.

The Committee met to discuss the Task from June 8 – 10, 2010, in a public meeting. On August 30, 2010, the Committee approved the enclosed Task 10-02 report containing its recommendations.

I submit this report to FMCSA for its consideration.

Sincerely,

//signed//

David R. Parker  
Chairman

Enclosure

## **Introduction**

The Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee (MCSAC) recognizes that safe commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operations involve carriers and drivers that are subject to regulatory oversight by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The MCSAC recognizes, too, that roadway users, vehicle design, and infrastructure issues are under the purview of other modal administrations of the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Committee believes that considering in-cab distractions in CMVs alone will not capture the full range of safety concerns arising from distracted driving by highway users. It is, therefore, necessary to address all aspects of distracted driving to promote a safety culture and reduce crashes and fatalities on our nation's roads and highways.

As is its charge under Task 10-02, this report presents ideas and concepts for addressing in-cab distractions (other than texting and cell phone use) for CMV operations under FMCSA authority. However, the Committee believes it would be remiss in helping to promote the core value of safety unless it recognizes that the accomplishment of a highway safety culture involves more than CMV operations. Therefore, the Committee presents safety-related ideas and concepts it believes the Department must pursue across transportation modes. This process will synchronize departmental initiatives aimed at changing conditions and behavior that contribute to distracted driving. DOT should continue to harmonize its efforts across transportation modes to realize measurable reductions in distraction-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

This letter report presents recommendations regarding Task 10-02. The Committee believes that FMCSA should prioritize implementation of these initiatives based on the Agency's determination of level of importance and feasibility of implementation.

## **Safety-Related Issues and Concepts under FMCSA Authority**

### Technology

The Committee recommends that FMCSA conduct an assessment of existing research to develop standards for installing or modifying in-cab technologies that may cause distracted driving. This assessment should include weighing the risks and benefits of various in-cab technologies and evaluating strategies such as the following:

- Pursue research initiatives on distracted driving, including the following:
  - Beginning with the list of technological devices found in Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety's September 24, 2009, "Distracted Driving Petition for Rulemaking: Requesting Issuance of a Rule to Consider Prohibiting or Restricting the Use of Electronic Devices During the Operation of Commercial Motor Vehicles," conduct literature reviews or sponsor new research to determine options for reducing distracted driving.
  - Pursue further research to determine the purpose of technologies and whether their application contributes to distracted driving.

- Prohibit or limit certain driver interactions with technology while a driver is operating the vehicle on a public roadway or when the vehicle is in motion.
  - Except in case of emergency, prohibit<sup>1</sup> manual driver response to dispatch mechanisms while the driver is operating the vehicle on a public roadway (e.g., one-button response).
- Identify methods of converting to alternative technologies instead of a system of visual messaging to the driver while operating the vehicle on a public roadway.
- Explore potential incentives to promote voice-only technologies, such as incorporating this incentive into CSA 2010 or considering it as part of a carrier's safety fitness determination.
- Consider methods to identify technologies that can prevent distracted driving, such as FMCSA-sponsored conferences.
- Determine whether in-cab driver event recorders could be a voluntary element of a cooperative safety plan.
- Consider a rulemaking aimed at developing appropriate performance-based standards to govern in-cab technologies that cause driver distraction, and revising 49 CFR to include a broader range of technologies.

### Enforcement

Based on current research, the Committee recommends that FMCSA assess the enforcement component of preventing distracted driving and recommend practical enforcement strategies to discourage and eliminate distracted CMV driving. This assessment should include evaluating the efficacy of strategies such as the following:

- Potential sanctions for using technologies that cause distracted driving, including the issuance of traffic tickets.
- Collaborate with law enforcement to develop proactive strategies that would allow for an enforcement action before a crash occurs.
- Consider enforcement of the texting prohibition and its application to other distractions.
- Classify distracted driving violations as moving violations.

### Education

To deter distracted driving, the Committee recommends that FMCSA undertake CMV driver education initiatives such as the following:

- Mandate periodic training in addition to entry level driver training.
- Promote reductions in insurance rates and other incentives to the industry for driver training and testing.
- Pursue proactive strategies to warn CMV drivers of the dangers of distracted driving such as –
  - Placing warning labels on products.
  - Issuing a warning during the activation of technologies (e.g., cell phone).

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<sup>1</sup> Except for technologies that do not take undue driver attention away from the road.

- Issuing an audio warning when the driver starts the engine.
- Urge carriers to develop conditions of employment and company policies concerning distracted driving. To assist, FMCSA could post sample policies on its website.

### Data

The Committee recommends that FMCSA work with the industry and academia to improve standards in data collection to enable universal analysis and to include precise definitions. Data collection could be improved through the following methods:

- Ensure validity through adequate sample size and duplication.
- Sample data before and after rule changes to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.
- Study whether there is a correlation between issues (e.g., hours of service and distraction, experience and distraction, training and distraction).
- Standardize state accident report forms to improve data collection.

### **Recommended Distracted Driving Initiatives Across DOT Modes**

The Committee recommends that FMCSA work with other transportation modal administrations and the DOT Safety Council to address passenger vehicle safety issues as part of a larger Departmental strategy of preventing distracted driving that may contribute to CMV crashes, injuries, and fatalities. This initiative should include original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and after-market technology manufacturers, particularly as discussions relate to vehicle equipment standardization. This work should address the following safety-related issues and concepts:

- Assess whether to develop and implement performance-based standards to govern in-vehicle technologies that contribute to driver distraction across all modes.
- Collaborate with OEMs and aftermarket equipment providers to understand their existing human factor design and installation processes, refining these processes as needed to deter distracted driving.
- Publish industry standards for safety best practices.
- Involve all appropriate government and private entities in providing safe areas for drivers to engage in activities that otherwise might lead to distracted driving on the road (e.g., responding to dispatch calls and accessing Wi-Fi).
- Conduct a large-scale public awareness campaign on distracted driving that includes elements such as the following:
  - Websites
  - Radio messages
  - Variable message signs along the roadways (provided the safety benefits outweigh distractions)
  - Movie theatre messages
  - Billboards (provided the safety benefits outweigh distractions)
  - Video screens at gas stations
  - Signs on the backs of CMVs

## **Conclusion**

Recognizing that distracted driving is an issue that is neither unique nor limited to commercial vehicle operations and FMCSA oversight, the MCSAC has developed recommendations related to the safety issues and concepts that fall under FMCSA authority, as well as other authorities. These recommendations are not limited to in-vehicle distractions, addressing instead a full range of potential distracted driving sources.

Under FMCSA's authority, the Committee recommends focusing on the following four main issue areas:

- (1) Technology, especially the varieties of in-cab technologies that both lead to distracted driving or could be installed to help prevent or alleviate it;
- (2) Enforcement, including strategies to discourage distracted driving by imposing higher fines or penalties on violators;
- (3) Education for drivers to help convey the safety risks and severity of consequences resulting from distracted driving; and
- (4) Data issues concerned with defining distracted driving and quantifying the crashes resulting from it.

With respect to other modal authorities, the MCSAC has highlighted the importance of collaborating with roadway users, vehicle design engineers, manufacturers (both OEMs and after-market technology manufacturers), and infrastructure developers to address the sources of distracted driving. The Committee's recommendations include establishing performance standards focused on sources of distracted driving, providing safe areas for drivers to engage in activities that would lead otherwise to distracted driving on the road, and investing in a public awareness campaign to educate the public on distracted driving.

The Committee's recommended integrated approach, which involves several issue areas and DOT modal administrations, is intended to foster a general safety culture on the road with a particular focus on distracted driving to further reduce crashes and fatalities on America's roads and highways.