

DID YOU KNOW???

ELECTRONIC LOG MANDATE WILL IMPROVE TRUCKING SAFETY

It's common knowledge that some truck and bus drivers fudge their log books, sometimes keeping two log books for the same trip, thus providing the ability to "cheat" on the hours they have been driving. For nearly 30 years there have been efforts to require the ditching of paper logs in favor of automatic devices to record when a truck is moving. Now, a mandate for electronic logging devices (ELD) is on the books, according to an article in the February 26, 2016 issue of "Status Report" by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). The rule aims to reduce fatigue-related crashes by drivers who may have doctored their paper logs to hide the real hours they have driven beyond what federal regulations allow.

"Since 1938, complex, on-duty/off-duty logs for truck and bus drivers were made with pencil and paper, virtually impossible to verify," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx in announcing the rule on Dec. 10, 2015. "This automated technology not only brings logging records into the modern age, it also allows roadside safety inspectors to unmask violations of federal law that put lives at risk," Foxx said.

Studies of long-distance truckers indicate that work rules commonly are flouted. Hours-of-service regulations govern how much time truck drivers can be on the road and when and for how long they need to rest. Although the current regulations allow too much time on the road — up to 11 hours a shift and up to 77 hours over 7 days — better compliance would likely reduce the number of tired drivers, according to the IIHS.

If the rule survives a legal challenge, commercial truck and bus drivers currently required to record their duty hours must start using compliant ELDs by December 2017. The rule exempts short-haul drivers who use time cards. Drivers of vehicles made before 2000 can continue to use paper logs. Carriers who already use ELDs that don't meet the new technology have until December 2019 to upgrade to compliant systems.

Adrian Lund, President of the IIHS, was there at the beginning when the Institute asked the U.S. Department of Transportation in October 1986 for an automatic recorder mandate to help enforce truck driver work rules. Two months later the Department of Transportation denied the petition. "We made a reasonable request, based on solid research. It should have been an easy win," Lund recalls. "Then every time it looked as if an electronic log requirement was gaining traction, trucking industry lobbyists, federal regulators or judges stalled the progress. And all the while people were being killed in crashes involving truckers who were too tired to be on the road."

The ELD mandate covers an estimated 3 million drivers and is expected to save 26 lives and prevent 562 injuries on average per year, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) says. Canada and Mexico-based truckers also will have to comply when operating on U.S. roads.

This will be a giant step to improve safety on all our highways. One only wonders why it took so long to achieve it!

For more articles on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board's web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on "Traffic Safety Board" under departments then look for Did You Know articles under "services". You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net.