

EOBR and HOS

The US Government is seeking to require that ALL commercial vehicles have EOBRs installed regardless of the company's safety rating. These Electronic Onboard Recorders are claimed to warn a driver of danger, communicate as a collective in regards to traffic issues (to local DOTs not the driver) and are claimed as a "great safety device". The dark side is that these EOBRs will be a driver's worse tattletale. One iota out of regulation and it will be recorded to be used against them in a court of law. Yes, American Trucker, Big Brother will forever be watching and riding in that cab with you if this comes to pass.

In all fairness, before EOBRs can be forcibly installed on trucks; the government needs to create HOSs that actually work. The problem we face today is that we have one complicated set of Hours of Service to fit all. This is like a one size fits all garment that just does not fit properly.

Local drivers' work schedule does not offer the same fit as that of an OTR driver. Regional drivers do not fit into the normal OTR mode. Over the Road drivers do not fit into regional or local work condition modes. Each driver set as well as commodity needs to have their own set of rules that work for that type of driver / commodity.

Temperature control drivers are generally forced to unload / reload in the very early am (11pm-4am). General commodity drivers have dock times of 8am - 4pm. Petroleum haulers run around the clock as does the demand for the product. Drivers who load out of assembly plants have an entire other schedule and method of operation. "Bedbuggers", hence household movers, work long hours loading and unloading in residential conditions as well as driving hours. Local drivers generally work one of two shifts and the list continues.

Local drivers run 10-12 hour shifts. Regional drivers make many stops in a short route requiring quick nap breaks and rarely time for a "full nights" sleep break. Long haul drivers load today, drive for 2-3 days and unload. No one set of rules will fit all these different scenarios. Before we begin setting punishments and fines the government needs to provide a set of rules that actually work. If you do not allow the driver to do his / her job in a legal fashion; how can you expect that driver to comply? Maybe monitoring without repercussion is a good way for the government to learn what it takes to truly be a trucker and get the job done.

Our government sets rules for our "life blood" providers through a series of people who have NEVER held a CDL or driven a truck. These same folk, with few exceptions, have never even been remotely involved in the transportation industry. The few drivers that senators invite to share their thoughts, opinions and experience are those who are union or ready for retirement. Talk to the average, every day driver or O/O working 100 actual hours a week to just scrape by and they ask them how to make rules that work.

Before the driver can bear the entire blunt; we need to put responsibility back on the shipper and receiver to set realistic delivery times as well as pick up schedules. Mega centers like Wal-Mart with their 15 minute windows or wait a week for re-delivery are not realistic. Anything might happen in transit from a mechanical breakdown, driver illness to traffic jams that will keep the driver from making this window. Should a driver follow the HOS to the letter; nothing would ever be on the shelves.

Dispatchers and load planners need to build realistic loads instead of "do me a favor" loads. The driver then needs to be paid adequately so he / she can make a living instead of coming

in under minimum wage for all his / her effort and sacrifice. The only way a driver earns "good money" is by paying Union dues or doing something illegal. These actions may range from working 100 hours a week and doing whatever it takes to get the load there by the "dispatcher's schedule" or truly illegal hauling. Pay per mile may have raised but the net effect is a pay decrease since the last rounds of HOS changes. OTR drivers dropped in pay from over \$1200 a week gross to the average driver now taking home less than \$500 a week (road meals not considered).

The entire system is broke. Before we impugn drivers and cost them more money; we need to fix the controlling system. Over the last 10 years, the US has imported truck drivers like any other commodity. We have gone abroad and enticed drivers from Russia, India, Australia and all over the world to come drive for the USA. Why? Simply put; because we pay so poorly in this profession when all is considered. Yet, we, as Americans, have a desperate desire for these commodities due to the "Capitalistic American way of life".

Trucking companies are feeling the pressure as well. Constantly rising fuel prices are forcing some fleets to govern their trucks at 60mph in hopes of increasing fuel mileage while strictly enforcing fuel stop management programs. The new HOS have created a paradox resulting in lost productivity thereby further reducing safety. The new rules require them to hire more drivers and purchase additional equipment in order to accommodate the same volume of work. Companies respond by training drivers in a rush through session so that seats can be filled. This is not safety! This is simply filling supply and demand. Moreover, DOT officers do not truly comprehend the regulations and cite drivers incorrectly. Look over the court cases; they speak for themselves.

Experts claim drivers should be subject to sleep and psychological studies. Then they premise this by stating these studies are needed only if the driver is obese. All or none folks; no cherry picking to obtain what you hope are your desired results. Drivers and trucking companies do not need psychological studies or big brother monitoring; they need reasonable schedules, decent working conditions, common sense, regular hours and access to proper training. The US Government is using the EOBR as a means to sneak a black box onboard a big rig under the façade of safety.

Law makers, it is time to stop penalizing truckers. Without them none of us would have any of our daily items. Wake up U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and US National Transportation Safety Board personnel and face reality. The time has come to stop covering the illness and treating only the symptoms. It is time to treat the cause. The system is broken. The entire SOP needs to be revamped. Only then can the government, with industry experts, trucking company representative and DRIVERS input; begin at square one and write an adequate set of Hours of Service with sections to truly fit all drivers, commodities and segments of transportation.

Sources:

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