

DUMP TRUCK CARRIERS CONFERENCE

NEWSLETTER

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(CAN ANYONE RELATE?)

George and Sheila

There were two elderly people, George and Sheila, living in a North Carolina mobile home park in the suburbs of Concord. He was a widower and she a widow and they had known one another for a number of years.

One evening a supper was held in the communal refectory and the two found themselves at the same table, seated across from one another. As the meal progressed, George made several admiring glances at Sheila and finally gathered his courage to ask her, "Sheila, will you marry me?"

After about five seconds of "careful consideration", Sheila answered. "Yes. Yes, I will."

The meal ended and, after a few pleasant exchanges, they went to their respective caravans. Next morning, George was troubled. "Did she say "yes" or did she say "no"?" he couldn't remember. Try as he would, he just could not recall. Not even a faint memory. So it was with some trepidation that he went to the telephone and called Sheila. First, he explained that he didn't remember as well as he used to. Then he reviewed the lovely evening past. As he gained a little more courage, George inquired gingerly, "Sheila, when I asked if you would marry me, did you say yes or did you say no?"

George was delighted to hear Sheila say, "why, I said yes, yes I will" and I meant it with all my heart." Then she continued, "I am so glad that you called, because I couldn't remember for the life of me who had asked."

DID YOU KNOW?

Roadcheck 2014 Results

One in five vehicles and one in 20 drivers were place Out-Of-Service during this year's three-day Roadcheck inspection event.

Results from the June 3-5 event were largely consistent with prior years. Out of the 73,475 truck and bus inspections performed, 81 percent of vehicles and 95 percent of drivers had no Out-Of-Service (OOS) violations.

The emphasis of this year's event - its 27th year - was on Hazardous Materials (HM) inspections.

CHURCHILL WIT:

Nancy Astor: "Winston if I were your wife I would put poison in your coffee".

Churchill: "If I were your husband I would drink it".

LET THEM SEE YOUR RECORDS!

Deny government auditors access to your records and you could be shut down.

That's the lesson an Indiana trucking company learned earlier this year after it failed to provide company records to federal investigators who demanded company safety records one week after one of the company's tractor-trailers collided into a line of passenger vehicles in a construction zone along Interstate 55 in Illinois.

Five days after the deadline for providing the documents, the FMCSA suspended the company's operating authority.

Under federal law, the FMCSA may revoke the operating authority registration of any motor carrier that fails to comply with an administrative subpoena or a letter demanding release of company safety records.

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NEWSLETTER

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Submissions by members and interested parties are welcome.

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\$17,000 (It's A New World)

The proposed penalty levied against a North Carolina motor carrier for just two counts of violating the 11-hour driving limit and one count of violating the 14-hour limit. During arbitration, the company was able to get the penalty reduced to \$10,200, to be paid in 50 installments.

CVSA WANTS LIMIT TO "PERSONAL CONVEYANCE"

The enforcement community would like to see limits places on the use of commercial motor vehicles for personal conveyance, as presently allowed by the regulations.

In comments submitted to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the (CVSA) says it wants the FMCSA to adopt a definition for "personal conveyance" to clarify when - and for how long - a commercial vehicle can be driven in an "off-duty" status.

The CVSA's proposed definition reads:

"Personal conveyance means an unladen commercial motor vehicle (CMV) may be used by a driver, while in an "off-duty" status and when the utilization of a motor carrier's CMV is necessary for personal transportation, and for a short distance."

Under this definition, a "short distance" is considered Travel to and from the nearest lodging and/or restaurant facilities in the immediate vicinity. "Personal conveyance" also includes use of a motor carrier's CMV to travel from a driver's home to his/her terminal (normal work reporting location), or from a driver's terminal (normal work reporting location) to his/her home. In any case, this distance cannot exceed the lesser of 25 miles or 30 minutes."

Current direction on the use of a CMV for personal conveyance does not place a limit on how far drivers may operate a CMV in an "off-duty" status. At present, enforcement personnel, if asked, just say "not too far."

TIRE PROBLEM LEADS TO WHISTLEBLOWER COMPLAINT

An Oregon trucker who was fired for refusing to drive an unsafe vehicle will get her job back, plus back wages and fees.

The driver noticed that one of her truck's tires was low on tread, so she had the tire replaced. Eight days later, she was fired.

After she filed a whistleblower compliant with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the agency concluded that the termination was a result of her refusal to drive with the unsafe tire and ordered the company to reinstate her.

THE CHANGED COLLECTION SITE PROCEDURES

The DOT has issued new guidance explaining when it's okay for a driver to leave a substance testing collection site, and when leaving could result in a determination that the driver refused to take the test.

Under DOT regulations a "refusal" holds the same consequences as a positive test. Drivers who refuse testing must stop driving and undergo a lengthy and costly evaluation and treatment process that puts a black mark on the driver's record and can make future employment difficult.

Drivers may face confusion because collection site personnel were not required to warn drivers about the consequences of leaving the site too early.

Finished Yet?

According to the new guidance, drivers are only allowed to leave the collection site after:

Both the driver and the collector

complete the "chain of custody" form,

- The collector gives Copy 5 of the form to the driver, and
- The collector secures the urine samples in plastic bags for shipment to a lab.

At that point, the collector is now required to tell the driver that he or she may leave.

If a driver is unable to provide a urine sample, the driver will be urged to drink up to 40 ounces of water and asked to wait for up to 3 hours or until he or she can provide a specimen. If the driver is unable to produce a specimen within 3 hours, then the testing process is complete and the driver can leave.

The Employer's Role

If a driver leaves the collection site too early, it's not considered a refusal until the employer decides it is. In other words, a driver's employer plays a key role in deciding whether the driver has refused a drug test, the DOT says.

These are the steps that are supposed to take place after a driver leaves a collection site too early:

- 1. The collector must inform the employer immediately,
- 2. The employer (and not a third party) has to decide whether the employee refused the test. How is that decision made? According to the DOT, the employer should consider:
 - The information documented on the drug testing form.
 - The advice and information received from the collector and service agents.

THE CHANGED COLLECTION SITE PROCEDURES

The Employer's Role (Continued)

- 2. (Continued)
 - Any supporting information provided by the employee. For example, in the event of a medical emergency, this may be copies of hospital admission records or EMS or police records
- 3. The employer must document their decision and the reasoning for the decision.
- 4. The employer must keep copies of the decision and the information relied on in making the decision for five years.

Documentation important! According to the DOT, if their investigators show up for an audit and discover that the employer didn't properly document a "refusal" decision, the agency may issue a penalty costing potentially thousands of dollars.

COURT BACKS MOTOR CARRIER THAT FIRED ALCOHOLIC DRIVER

A federal appeals court has ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not protect a commercial truck driver who was terminated after being diagnosed with alcoholism.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit affirmed a lower court's ruling that the motor carrier had a right to dismiss the driver for failing to meet the Department of Transportation's (DOT) driver qualification standards.

The plaintiff in the case was employed as a driver by the defendant motor carrier for over

six years. During that time, the driver's personal physician diagnosed him with alcoholism and referred him to treatment. After learning of the diagnosis, his employer terminated his employment, citing DOT regulations and company policy.

The driver alleged that the employer discriminated against him based on his disability - alcoholism - in violation of the ADA. He also said the company violated his Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) rights for failing to return him to his position after taking FMLA leave.

Qualified

To settle the ADA claim, the court's three-judge panel had to determine if the driver was a "qualified individual" under the ADA, which meant determining who makes the final decision on whether he is a qualified individual - his medical provider or his employer.

Part of that determination was whether the driver could perform the "essential functions" of the job "with or without reasonable accommodation." One of his essential duties was being qualified as a commercial driver under both DOT regulations and company policy, the court said.

DOT regulations prohibit anyone with a "current clinical diagnosis of alcoholism" from driving commercial motor vehicles (Sec. 391.41(b)(13)). In addition, the carrier had a company policy prohibiting the employment of anyone as a driver if he or she had been diagnosed with alcoholism in the past five years.

The driver argued that only a DOT medical examiner could determine if he had a clinical diagnosis of alcoholism, and he was cleared for duty after his latest DOT medical exam.

COURT BACKS MOTOR CARRIER THAT FIRED ALCOHOLIC DRIVER (Cont'd)

The company argued that it's up to the motor carrier to ultimately decide if a driver is qualified.

The Better Argument

The company "has the better argument," the court ruled. "DOT regulations unambiguously place the burden on an employer to ensure that an employee meets all qualification standards," including the alcoholism standard.

"Since the regulations place the onus on the employer to qualified to drive a commercial vehicle, the employer must determine whether someone suffers from a current clinical diagnosis of alcoholism," the court wrote.

FMLA

Concerning the driver's FMLA claim, the court again ruled in favor of the employer. The company argued that it would have discharged the driver upon his diagnosis of alcoholism regardless of whether he took FMLA leave, and the court agreed.

The court also found no evidence that the driver's termination was related to taking FMLA leave.

HUGE FINE RESULTS FROM DRIVER TERMINATIONS

A Michigan carrier has been ordered to pay nearly \$1 million in damages after wrongfully terminating two truck drivers and a foreman who complained about hours-of-service violations.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the asphalt paving company was ordered to reinstate all three employees, with back pay and damages totaling \$953,916.

27 Hours

The foreman was terminated in 2012 after repeatedly raising concerns about exceeding hours-of-service. At least twice, the foreman and crew were expected to work and drive more than 27 hours straight, OSHA says.

A truck driver was terminated in April 2013 after also raising concerns about hours-of-service. OSHA says the driver refused to sign an affidavit denying that he was required to work in excess of federal limits. The company wanted to use the affidavit in their response to OSHA's investigation of the fired foreman's claims.

Another driver was terminated in July 2013 after raising concerns about vehicle maintenance and hours-of-service.

OSHA enforces the whistleblower provisions found in federal laws that cover private-sector drivers and other employees of commercial motor carriers.

Companies covered under the whistleblower laws may not terminate or retaliate against employees for refusing to operate a vehicle in violation of federal rules related to safety, health, or security, or because the employee had a reasonable apprehension of serious injury to themselves or the public because of a vehicle's safety or security condition.

Employers are prohibited from retaliating against employees who raise various protected concerns or provide protected information to the employer or to the government.

Information on employee whistleblower rights is available at www.whistleblowers.gov.

DON'T PUNISH DRIVERS WHO HELP THE FMCSA, OSHA WARNS

A North Carolina motor carrier has learned the hard way that you shouldn't fire drivers who cooperate with government auditors.

The company was ordered to pay more than \$260,000 in back pay and damages after firing four truck drivers who provided information to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) during an audit that revealed hours-of-service violations.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration said the company violated the drivers' whistleblower rights.

Though the company passed it's FMCSA audit, it had to pay a civil penalty of \$32,000 for it's hours-of-service violations and remains on "Alert" in the HOS Compliance BASIC under the CSA program.

SIX DRIVERS CHALLENGE PSP IN CLASS-ACTION SUIT

The drivers, all members of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), have filed a class-action lawsuit challenging the government's Pre-Employment Screening Program (PSP), and claim that the PSP violates driver rights by unlawfully disseminating driver safety records to potential employers.

The PSP releases driver crash and inspection histories to prospective employers for a fee, and is available online at www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov.

The legal challenge argues that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is only authorized by Congress to report crashes and "serious driver-related violations" through the PSP.

The fact that the agency also disseminates information about violations that have not been deemed "serious" has "improperly disparaged" the drivers and led to a loss of income the drivers claim.

The drivers argue that the only "serious" violations are those that result in a driver being placed out-of-service.

The plaintiffs are seeking statutory damages of \$1,000, but - more significantly - they are asking the court to award damages to all drivers for whom PSP reports have been prepared.

It will be interesting to see if the court decides to shield the drivers from the results of their own behavior.

RESEARCH INDICATES CAFFEINE TOPS MUSIC FOR STAYING ALERT AT THE WHEEL

New research confirms that both consuming caffeine and listening to music can help drivers feel more awake, but caffeine is more effective at actually helping them drive safety.

Results indicated that drivers who used either caffeine or music as a stimulant felt significantly less tired than those who did not. The researches noted, however, that those who drank a caffeinated beverage to stay awake performed their driving tasks much better than those who listened to music or those in the control group.

Researchers at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada concluded that, "even though both caffeine and music keep drivers feeling more awake, caffeine also helps them maintain good driving performance," Liu said. "Music, on the other hand, can distract drivers, which may explain why driving performance is not significantly improved when it is used as a fatigue countermeasure."

WOULD AN INSURANCE INCREASE AFFECT YOU?

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is seeking input on the possibility of increasing the minimum amount of liability insurance coverage that motor carriers are required to maintain.

The current levels of coverage are not high enough to cover the costs of serious vehicle accidents, the FMCSA says.

In an "advanced notice of proposed rulemaking" published on November 28, 2014, the agency asks for input on 26 specific questions to help guide its actions as it decides whether to increase the minimum levels of financial responsibility for motor carriers, including liability coverage for bodily injury or property damage.

The federal government has required motor carriers to maintain certain levels of financial responsibility since the 1930s, either through insurance, a bond, or other financial security, as a means to protect the public in the event of a crash.

An April 2014 report to Congress found that while catastrophic motor carrier crashes are rare, the costs for resulting injuries can exceed \$1 million. Current insurance limits do not adequately cover these costs, the FMCSA says, because the rules have not kept pace with increases in medical expenses and other crash-related costs.

Comments will be accepted through February 26, 2015. Comments identifying docket number FMCSA-2014-0211 may be submitted online at www.regulations.gov or may be sent by fax to (202) 493-2251.

CARRIERS WANT EXEMPTION FROM 30-MINUTE BREAKS

Three construction companies involved in road repair are hoping to be excused from the requirement that drivers take a 30-minute rest break every 8 hours.

The family of companies based in Wisconsin, with 1,300 drivers, recently applied for an exemption from the break requirement with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

Under FMCSA regulations, drivers of commercial motor vehicle (CMVs) who operate outside the 100 air-mile radius "local" zone are required to take a 30-minute rest break at least every 8 consecutive hours of the day.

The companies argue that their operations are unique and the break requirement significantly affects their ability to complete road repairs on time. Most repair contracts specify a finite amount of time to close the roads and get the job done, the companies contend.

The drivers transport materials and equipment needed for the maintenance and construction of roads, bridges, and parking lots. Most of their driving is at the start and end of the work-shift.

According to the companies' exemption application, "95% of our drivers spend less than 15% of their on-duty time actually driving a CMV (roughly only 2 hours per day) with the other 85% spent on the job site."

Perishable

The companies argue that asphalt is perishable and must be laid down before the temperature drops enough to make it unusable.

CARRIERS WANT EXEMPTION FROM 30-MINUTE BREAKS (Cont'd)

"Once a delivery is started it must be completed, and all steps possible must be taken to ensure that a load of material reaches its destination on time and without disruption," the companies say.

Requiring a 30-minute break can risk the integrity or the product and put contracts in jeopardy, the applicants state. Mandatory breaks are unnecessary, they say, because their drivers routinely get numerous 10-, 15-, and 20-minute breaks throughout the work day.

After seeking public input, the FMCSA is authorized to issue exemptions for up to two years as long as safety is not compromised. Others who have sought an exemption from the break rule include livestock haulers and readymixed concrete drivers.

BAN HANDS-FREE PHONE USE?

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is calling on federal regulators to ban commercial drivers from using any type of hands-free portable electronic device while driving, including cellphones.

The recommendation comes in the wake of a May 28, 2013, train/truck collision that occurred while the driver was talking on a hands-free cellphone. The crash in Rosedale, Maryland, resulted in a 15-car derailment and subsequent explosion.

An NTSB investigation recently concluded that the accident was caused by the truck driver's failure to make sure that the tracks were clear before crossing. The driver's distraction from talking on the phone at the time of the crash, however, was probably a contributing factor, the NTSB reported.

The Board wants the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to prohibit the

use of hands-free cellphones by all commercial driver's license (CDL) holders while operating a commercial vehicle.

Federal rules currently include a ban on the use of cellphones while driving, but only when hand-held (Sec. 392.82).

CARRIER SEEKING EXEMPTION FROM 12-HOUR LIMIT (Long Shot!)

A Pennsylvania-based motor carrier is asking the DOT for an exemption from the daily 12hour on-duty limit for its short-haul drivers.

Under 49 CFR Sec. 395.1(e)(1), drivers are exempt from using logs when they stay within a 100-air-mile radius, return home each day, and go off-duty within 12 consecutive hours after staring the workday.

Those who exceed the 12-hour limit have to fill out a log covering the entire day, even if they don't realize they'll be exceeding the limit until the end of the day.

The company - which transports materials such as topsoil, fill, and stone - says its drivers are "in and out of the truck all day long" and often unable to complete the day within 12 hours. It wants its drivers to be exempt from logs even when they work past the 12-hour limit.

Having to retroactively complete a log at the end of the day is impractical, the company says, and it "affects the driver's pay, production rates and makes for a very sloppy log book with so many lines between driving and on duty."

The FMCSA is authorized to grant exemption for up to two years as long as public safety will not be harmed.

Comments that the FMCSA received in response may be viewed online at www.regulations.gov under docket FMC-SA-2014-0322.

MY TURN

IS IT YOUR BUSINESS WHEN YOUR NEIGHBOR BEATS HIS WIFE?

(by Larry Dannemiller)

We have alliances and informal agreements around the world with regimes who are neither merciful or just to their own people. We justify this as economic or military necessity and kind of pretend we don't notice what is going on. If we notice, how can we be allies?

In 1973, when editorially discussing Henry Kissinger's request to Congress to basically "look the other way," as to Jewish persecution, when formulating policy with Russia to reduce the threat of a nuclear holocaust, the Wall Street Journal published this parable:

"Two men living on a remote island had been feuding for years. Whenever either would venture into the no-man's land between their family domains, the other would feel threatened and knives would be drawn. Unhappily, the no-man's land included the islands best freshwater spring, and no member of either family dared to drink its waters.

A long drought, drying up the other springs and threatening the lives of both families, promised at least to end the feud. Though eyeing each other suspiciously, the two men managed to reach an understanding allowing both to use the spring, and indeed joining their efforts to develop its resources. Within this tenuous understanding both could prosper, but if either or both were cut off from the spring they would die.

Encouraged that the two could work together on something so important, the first man starts to rethink his experiences. Perhaps the long feud was merely an honest misunderstanding. Perhaps he had misjudged this fellow, perhaps he had merely imagined the evil intentions. Perhaps a certain allowance needs to be made for different and sometimes rough ways. Perhaps despite these differences, the other man is trustworthy enough that the important things can be settled and the knives can be forgotten.

Then the first man discovers that even while

working industriously on the spring by day, by night the second man is beating his wife and terrorizing his children. Some of those beaten, fearing for their lives, appeal to the first man for help. What is he to do? He is moved by their plea, but he has heard that quarrels of another family are none of his business. He knows that if he antagonizes the second man the understandings may collapse and all may die. Yet if the beatings reveal true character, how long will the understandings last? Can any agreement with such a person, the first man wonders, really protect his future and his family's?

Only a cruel fate could create such a dilemma. A hundred philosophers could wrestle with it for a hundred years without providing a happy solution. Yet it is not only in parables that fate is cruel, and the United States, trapped on the world island with its Soviet antagonist, finds the dilemma not hypothetical but real. Just as agreements are being reached to curb nuclear arms, and just as American granaries are feeding the Soviet people, we find that they are persecuting a segment of their population."

Right now the United States is trapped on an island in a world with many countries who we either align or support, or who are extremely important to our economy, but who have near pagan methods of governing their countrymen. You know who! Think Oil!! So, what should we do? It is obvious that our revulsion over their conduct is not a deterrent.

As powerful as this country is, we still can not enforce a universal ban on wife beating. Although some of our politicians and activists constantly harp on other nations' behavior, the reality is we must have allies; and, no doubt, some are better than others.

But what about Cuba? Do we really need to open the door to a despotic regime which offers no strategic benefit to our county; who are just looking for a new sugar daddy since their present escorts, Russia and Venezuela, are going broke and no longer have the means to support the Castro's in the manner they are accustomed?



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