

Major Policy Initiatives for 2015

Truck Size and Weight

Bigger, overweight trucks are more dangerous to motorists and truck drivers, more destructive to our roads and bridges, and more damaging to our environment and health. Studies have shown that longer, heavier trucks operate with lower safety margins on both Interstate and lower class roads. The Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) strongly supports retaining current federal size and weight limits and opposes any special interest exemptions and firmly opposes any legislative effort to increase double tractor trailers from 28 feet per trailer to 33 feet. This length increase would result in a 33-percent increase in low-speed off-tracking, a six-foot wider turning radius, and an additional 22-feet of stopping distance. The TSC also opposes increasing the federal weight limit for large trucks from 80,000lbs. to 91,000lbs.

Minimum Insurance Levels

Minimum levels of insurance for trucks have not been increased in over 35 years and are woefully deficient. Consequently a very large portion of the damages and losses caused by elements of the trucking industry are imposed upon the motoring public and taxpayers. If the entire industry were to be required to absorb the losses it causes, there would be significant operational and equipment changes, which would result in safer highways for all. The TSC supports regulatory and legislative actions that would increase minimum insurance levels immediately, and periodic evaluations to provide for future increases necessitated by inflation and rising health care costs.

Truck Driver Fatigue | Hours of Service

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) have repeatedly cited fatigue as a major factor in truck crash causation. The current federal Hours of Service (HOS) regulations allow truck drivers to drive up to 11 hours within a 14 hour work day, a demanding and exhausting schedule. The TSC supports efforts to reduce fatigue including: stopping exemptions from HOS requirements; immediate implementation for electronic logging devices (ELDs); supporting efforts to return HOS to the previous 10-hour rule; and, supporting efforts to implement sleep apnea screening and rulemaking; overturning the suspension on the 2013 34 hour restart rule and reverting back to the 34 hour re-start provisions, which required that the restart period contain two periods between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. and allowed one restart every 168 hours.

Crash Avoidance Technologies

The TSC supports requirements for proven life-saving technologies such as electronic stability control, forward collision avoidance and mitigation systems, and lane departure warning systems. The TSC supports NHTSA's efforts to move forward with the proposed speed limiter rule immediately, set at 65 mph.

Rear/Side Guards

The federal government should require all trucks and trailers to be equipped with energy-absorbing rear impact guards mounted lower to the ground, with vertical supports spaced farther apart to effectively protect car occupants from death and injury in rear impact crashes. This safety technology is proven and well known. The TSC urges DOT to immediately release the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for improved rear underride guards that are lower, wider, and more energy absorbing; and to accelerate the process for research and rulemaking for side underride protection systems.