



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

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TRUCK CRASH FATALITIES INCREASE AGAIN IN 2011 DESPITE OVERALL DECREASE IN TRAFFIC FATALITIES

Second Consecutive Year of Dangerous Trend

Arlington, VA (December 10, 2012): The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) revealed today that truck crash fatalities increased in 2011, while overall traffic fatalities decreased, for the second consecutive year. The greatest change in truck crash fatalities occurred in the truck occupant category which showed a 20-percent increase. This dangerous trend serves to emphasize the safety issues with large trucks, which impose tremendous risk to both passenger vehicle occupants, as well as to truck drivers.

Daphne Izer, founder of Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) after her son Jeff and three of his friends were killed in a truck crash, stated, “Truck driving is consistently listed in the top ten most dangerous jobs. Drivers are pushed to their limits regularly working 14 hour days, including overnight shifts, day-in and day-out. It’s just not humanly possible to keep up that pace and it negatively impacts safety, both for the truck driver and for the rest of us who drive alongside these huge rigs. Recently, it was reported that the trucking industry’s turnover rate climbed over 90-percent, and it’s no wonder as to why. Truck drivers are exposed to daily dangers, overworked and only make, on average, \$38,000 a year. Until the industry improves working conditions and pays a competitive wage, they’ll continue to lose experienced drivers and we’ll continue to be subjected to unnecessary dangers on our roadways.”

Truck drivers also face a high health risk for personal injury, high blood pressure, heart attacks, cancer and diabetes, to name a few. The life expectancy for truck drivers is 61 years, 16 years less than the average.

This new data supports the position of safety groups, and the friends and family of truck crash victims, who maintain that improvements to truck safety issues are vital, particularly as the economy improves and more goods are moved on our roadways. Safety advocates have long asserted the importance of preventing any increases to the size and weight limits of trucks and returning HOS to the 10-hour limit. Bigger, heavier trucks are more deadly, more destructive to roadway and bridge infrastructure and result in more unfunded costs. Additionally, studies show that truck crash risk increases exponentially after 8 consecutive hours of driving and the highest level of crash risk occurs during both the 10th and 11th hours of consecutive driving. Decreasing truck driver’s HOS by one hour would limit the time they are on the road during this period of highest crash risk. Truck weight and size limits and HOS are but two truck safety issues that must be addressed if we hope to resolve the nearly 4,000 fatalities and over 80,000 injuries that result yearly from truck related crashes and constitute a national health and safety crisis.

John Lannen, Executive Director of the Truck Safety Coalition added, “Under the best of conditions, truck driving is a dangerous and high stress job. If we want to keep skilled and safe drivers behind the wheel, the trucking industry needs to be competitive by increasing salary and benefits and treating truck drivers like professional workers. A 70 hour work week, with no benefits and low pay will neither attract nor retain the best and safest drivers and we all pay the price for hiring the less expensive person for the job.”

The Truck Safety Coalition (www.trucksafety.org), a partnership between the Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) Foundation and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.), is dedicated to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policy-makers and media about truck safety issues.