

National Idling Reduction Planning Conference May 17-19, 2004

Industry Perspectives Panel - Gail Swiger, Swigers Trucking - driver

Good morning. I have to thank Linda Gaines for the great summary she presented. I'm glad to know that user concerns seem to be really heard by the 'powers' and that everyone's input is considered valuable.

I may not be giving you too much new information, but the entire issue of idle reduction affects almost every part of my job and lifestyle.

I tried to organize my thoughts by asking myself some questions and hope the answers will help you understand a truck driver's view on this subject.

Why do I idle?

- I need to be comfortable during my DOT required sleep time – 10 hours.
- Starting and stopping the truck engine disturbs my co-driver when I'm on the fuel island, at a weigh station or a quick run into a rest area.
- Starting and stopping causes spikes in the electrical system that can ruin expensive electronic devices – like my computer, refrigerator and inverter.
- Maybe I know that parts are starting to fail on my truck and the boss won't replace them until they're inoperable – I need to be sure my truck will run when I know I'm at risk of not being able to re-start it.
- I may be stuck in a line or situation that takes longer than I expect
 - Fuel desk when their computer system goes down
 - Weigh station doing spot checks
 - Phone call to dispatch, maintenance or a customer and being put on 'hold'
- I have allergies and can minimize medications by keeping my windows up and my fresh air vents closed – means I have to run the truck to sleep well.
- Other vehicles and equipment running near me disturb my sleep.
 - Temperature control units with the start/stop option have warning buzzers that are safety oriented for folks working on the units, but really intrusive to my sleep.
 - Trucks come and go continually through parking areas. Nobody really works on the same schedule – that's set by customers and dispatchers.
 - There's not much that I can do to minimize the ways I disturb other drivers either.
- Sometimes I just have so many things on my mind that I just forget to turn it off.

Where do I idle?

- I find it tough to get a safe parking place in truckstops and rest areas for my required 10-hour and 34-hour rest periods. Therefore, I stop to take care of personal business and then go to my customer location to wait for my door assignment. I'm typically in a line, outside the security gate, parked on the street or possibly a marshalling yard for a minimum of 10 hours. The customer doesn't set appointment times, so it's all first in – first out. I NEED to be near the front of the line because the revised hours of service have impacted the amount of time I have available to be on-duty once my day has started.
- On the fuel island, in the truckstop or rest area while I take care of personal business.
- During my pre-trip inspection – I have to charge, check and test my air system for leaks while I'm walking around my unit.
- In traffic jams, lines at inspection and immigration checkpoints, weather and accident situations. At a crawl or stop/go situation, I can't be stressing my electrical and HVAC systems – it will definitely shorten their lives.

Who's going to pay for keeping my cab cooled or heated?

- OK, so there are new laws my boss is worried about. NOW he's saying I can't idle the truck and he even set it up so the engine automatically shuts down after 5 minutes. I never had a problem before, but now it's too hot or cold for me to sleep comfortably. I'm getting up to restart the truck OR I'm tossing and turning trying to get to sleep.
- I hear there's some new stuff going on at truckstops, but it's not free to hook-up to use the systems. My boss says it's MY problem – figure it out. I can stay at motels if I can find one with room to park or I can pay to hook-up to something. I make about \$35,000/year before taxes and if I hook-up everyday for restful sleep, this stuff will cost me over \$2,500/year! I just can't afford that! I never had to pay before when I just idled the truck.

What else is added to my day?

- If my boss is adding equipment to the truck, how tough is it going to be for me to pre-trip the system or systems?
- Do I have to perform some maintenance tasks: check oil, check cords and plugs, check coolants or diagnose problems?
- What am I going to have to do and how much time will it take out of my 14 hour work day and 70 hour in 8 day work week?
- Am I going to be PAID for this time and work?

What do I have to worry about?

- Will I be ruining something on my truck if I forget to disconnect or shut-off some kind of system?
- What do I do if an auxiliary system fails? How do sleep?
- Do I have to buy different fuels? What if they aren't readily available on my traffic lanes? NOW what do I do??
- I already have to try to remember TOO many regulations. What do I do when I'm in a place that says it's against the law to use the type of systems my boss installed?

Why should I care?

- Everything is OK – I've run this way over 20 years now and have no problems with it.
- I don't want to be tripping over cords or having systems take away from the storage space I have available.
- My pay is based on how much freight I can haul – this equipment isn't paying ME to haul it around.
- I've heard that lawnmowers, chainsaws, motorcycles, weed whackers, leaf blowers and vacuums, ATVs and boats use WAY more energy and have many more emissions than trucks do. Go pick on THEM!
- How much more energy will a coal-fired power plant have to produce and what are their emissions to supply an electrification system?
- Will there really be a gain or will something truly be improved by doing any of this stuff?

In conclusion, somebody is going to have to explain to me why we have to change anything. If it will take away from my pay, add work and responsibilities or be too many new and different things to learn, there's nothing good in it for me.

Thank you.

[I have given you many opinions that may not be my own – they are held by many drivers and it was my responsibility to represent them at this event.]