



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: September 8, 2000

In reply refer to: H-00-24

Mr. W. Dewey Clower
President
National Association of Truck Stop Operators
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The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating transportation accidents, determining their probable cause, and making recommendations to prevent similar accidents from occurring. We are providing the following information to urge your organization to take action on the safety recommendation in this letter. The Safety Board is vitally interested in this recommendation because it is designed to prevent accidents and save lives.

This recommendation addresses the lack of information about parking available to truckdrivers. The recommendation is derived from the Safety Board's special investigation of truck parking areas. As a result of this investigation, the Safety Board has issued 10 safety recommendations, one of which is addressed to the National Association of Truck Stop Operators. Information supporting this recommendation is discussed below. The Safety Board would appreciate a response from you within 90 days addressing the actions you have taken or intend to take to implement our recommendation.

In April 1999, the Safety Board began a Truck/Bus Safety Initiative and to date has held four public hearings¹ to obtain information from a variety of sources about the relevant safety issues regarding trucks and buses and on how to address them. Participating in these hearings were representatives from the truck and bus industries, vehicle and equipment manufacturers, labor unions, safety advocacy groups, and various State and Federal agencies.

One issue, emerging from hearing testimony, was the insufficient number of parking spaces² for truckdrivers who want or need to use them. By current law, truckdrivers may drive for

¹ Held between April 14 and 16, 1999, the first hearing focused on motor carrier oversight. Held between August 31 and September 2, 1999, the second hearing examined advanced technology applications that may reduce the number of accidents involving trucks and buses. Held between October 20 and 22, 1999, the third hearing reviewed the highway transportation safety aspects of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Held on January 20 and 21, 2000, the fourth hearing examined commercial driver licensing and medical certification issues.

² Parking spaces refer to all authorized nonemergency parking areas, both public and private.

no more than 10 consecutive hours. The availability of adequate parking is important if truckdrivers are to obtain the rest needed to operate their vehicles safely. A 1995 Safety Board study³ has shown that the most important factors in predicting a fatigue-related accident are the duration of the last sleep period, the time slept in the past 24 hours, and the split sleep periods. The availability of parking for truckdrivers can have an impact on all three of these factors.

In contrast to the typical motorist, a truckdriver often has the opportunity to rest in the truck's sleeper berth rather than stay at a motel at night. Besides incurring a monetary expense, staying at a motel may involve a logistical problem; a motel may not be convenient when a driver wants or needs, because of the hours-of-service regulation, to rest. In addition, many motels do not have parking available to accommodate a large truck tractor-semitrailer. Given the nature of trucking and the financial and logistical pressures to operate efficiently, truckers have come to rely primarily on parking facilities on or along their route. Regardless of the amount of route planning truckdrivers may do, whether they can arrive at a particular place by a particular time is very much out of their control and dependent on traffic, weather, or other factors such as pickup and delivery delays.

Currently, truckdrivers have a number of guides available to them that they can consult to find the nearest parking in case their trip is delayed for some reason, such as weather or traffic. Two such guides are Interstate America's *Truck Stops* (\$11.95) and *Exit Guide* (\$17.95), which contain information on all travel-related businesses and services (including the size of truck parking lots) at every exit, as well as details on public rest areas and weigh stations. Still another publication is the TR Publishing *National Truck Stop Directory*, "*The Trucker's Friend*." (\$9.95) This directory contains information on private truck stops, including the interstate, exit number, map grid location, services, number of parking spaces, and whether the lot is paved.

In addition, some commercial software mapping programs are available that provide information on private truck stops at interstate exits. For example, DeLorme Street Atlas USA 7.0 (\$44.95) contains exit service information, including the availability of truck parking and the direction in which the driver must exit for the private truck stop. As more computers are installed in truck cabs, mapping software may be an excellent system to keep drivers informed of nearby public rest areas and truck stops throughout the country and to allow the drivers to plan routes that will place them near truck stops when they want or need to rest.

Truckdrivers know the regulations regarding hours-of-service, how long they are allowed to drive, and how long they should rest. If truckdrivers possess accurate information on the locations of public rest areas, private truck stops, and alternative parking locations, they should be able to plan their trips so that they can take advantage of the parking that is available.

While the commercial guides that are available are comprehensive with respect to private truck stops and public rest areas, they do not include all parking that may be available, such as park-and-ride lots or weigh stations. Maryland and Michigan are both independently updating

³ National Transportation Safety Board. 1995. *Factors that Affect Fatigue in Heavy Truck Accidents*. Safety Study NTSB/SS-95/01. Washington, DC.

truckers' maps to indicate where other parking is available and providing more detailed information to drivers.

Truckdrivers need to be informed of parking alternatives, possibly through the use of better signage, maps, or pamphlets to identify private truck stops and public rest areas with truck parking; the operation of radio or national cellular telephone numbers to communicate public rest area or private truck stop information; and the application of Intelligent Transportation Systems technology to deliver real-time parking information. The Safety Board concludes that while existing guides and mapping programs may list the private truck stops and public rest areas, they are not all-inclusive of the available truck parking, such as alternative locations like park-and-ride lots and weigh stations. Also, the Safety Board concludes that some truckdrivers do not have enough information on parking locations and need to be made aware of all available parking, both in advance of and during trips.

The States are making an effort to instruct drivers, but the burden should not be left completely on the States' shoulders. With the help of the Federal Government and industry, the full loop of instruction can be closed so that drivers can plan where to stop and park safely.

In fact, dispatchers can even help drivers find a place to park. In many large trucking companies, the trucks are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) that enable dispatchers to tell drivers where to pick up a load, where to drop off a load, and where to get gas, based on the truck's precise location. GPS, combined with an electronic guide, could let dispatchers notify truckdrivers of the nearest parking areas. Companies, in an effort to improve safety, can help ensure that their drivers find a safe place to park. The Safety Board concludes that the GPS technology, combined with electronic maps and the ability to communicate that information to truckdrivers, could also be used to help drivers locate parking areas.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Association of Truck Stop Operators:

Cooperate with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to create a comprehensive guide, available both on paper and in electronic format, for all truckdrivers to use that will inform drivers about the locations of all parking areas (both private and public) and the space availability. (H-00-24)

The Safety Board also issued safety recommendations to the Federal Highway Administration; Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration; Governors of Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington; American Trucking Associations, Inc.; Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association; National Private Truck Council; and National Industrial Transportation League. In your response to the recommendation in this letter, please refer to Safety Recommendation H-00-24. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 314-6170.

Chairman HALL and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT, GOGLIA, and BLACK concurred in this recommendation.

By: Jim Hall
Chairman