

**Prepared Remarks for Anne S. Ferro
FMCSA Administrator
Women in Trucking
Salute to Women Behind the Wheel
Louisville, KY
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Introduction

It is my pleasure to join you today to celebrate the achievement of women in trucking and the high safety standards everyone here brings to the road.

First, I want to thank Ellen Voie for her visionary leadership and for her hard work in making this occasion so successful.

We didn't quite reach the international record of women truck drivers gathering at the same time, I am absolutely confident you'll get 'em next year!

How often have you heard someone say that trucking is a man's world? Have you had someone say that the job is too rough, too stressful or too dangerous?

By being here you have proven the naysayers wrong.

Well, I'm here to tell you that women not only belong in trucking – but can raise the bar for the industry with the exceptional skills you possess and your dedication to safe driving practices. Thank you – award winners – for being safe and for being good role models.

Setting Goals

It takes an enterprising woman to be a trucker. Days are long and the road can be a lonely place. Doing it on their own has been a way of life for women over many decades. The first licensed female truck driver was Lille Drennan who received her commercial drivers license back in 1929 in Texas.

She took over the small trucking business she founded with her ex-husband. In the twenty four years, she operated Drennan Truck Line, Lille Drennan fought back her critics with a powerful drive to prove them wrong.

I've read that on occasion, Lille drove over forty-eight hour stretches with almost no sleep or rest, but apparently never had an accident! Now, this was before hours-of-service regulations of course. I certainly don't advocate doing what Lille did; far from it. Safety should always be the number one priority.

Instead, I think we can try to be like Lille Drennan in the path she blazed for women. She successfully recruited women to drive trucks for the Army's quartermaster corps during World War II. She also participated in state sponsored drivers' skills competitions too. She took pride in her skills and was determined to be the best at what she did. And, she was fearless.

I think we have a little bit of Lille Drennan in each of us.

By showing professionalism, women truckers are making it possible to expand opportunities for other women to join the ranks in trucking.

I believe that through positive role models, a strong work ethic and showing our support for other women, we can be our best promoters and make trucking a better career for everyone.

Personal Story

Like you – my career path has been dominated by men. But, I never really saw it that way. My mother taught me at a young age to set your mind to do something and do it well. No excuses.

While I give my Mother credit for my strong work ethic, I also had good timing for my entry and advancement in public service and association leadership in the trucking industry.

I was honored to serve as the first woman motor vehicle administrator for the State of Maryland back in 1997. Six years later, I was the first woman to lead the Maryland Motor Truck Association in Maryland.

I never thought it couldn't be done; and neither should you.

As I look back, I see that the lessons my mother taught me was always a part of me in all I did – whether I realized it or not.

To succeed in previously male dominated professions, some women have felt they had to fit in or be eaten alive.

Those days are over. Even for trucking.

I also believe that women individually are stronger when we support each other.

Tips for Success

I appreciate the challenges faced by women truckers. Setting goals and breaking barriers isn't easy. To help, I want to encourage you to take charge of your career. As the traditional population of white and middle aged truckers has decreased, opportunities may open for women to play a bigger role in trucking. Seek out these new opportunities.

In growing numbers, across the spectrum of small business, women are taking charge by owning their own companies. In fact, according to the latest statistics by the Small Business Administration, women own 28 percent of all non-agricultural based businesses. And, women make up 51 percent the total U.S. population.

Despite being the majority gender in the U.S., only 5 percent of truckers are women. Let's work to double the 5 percent in 5 years because strength comes from numbers.

I'd like to offer some tips for women on the road.

1. **Be safe on and off the road.** If your employer isn't doing all it can to protect your personal security and safety, bring your concerns directly to them. Don't take no for an answer; be persistent.
2. **Live a healthy lifestyle.** Trucking takes time away from exercise, rest and relaxation, and can escalate poor eating habits. Take time and energy to be your own health advocate. Eat right and be smart about lifestyle choices. You owe it to your self and your family to find a workable balance between life on the road and time for rest and family.
3. **Help other women.** As I've said earlier, if there is an opportunity to help fellow women truckers with support and advice, take the time to do that. In fact, recruit other women to trucking. As women, we need to be our best champions.

Finally, I'd like to leave you with advice I once read that was given by the first female pilot hired by a U.S. commercial airline.

That pilot was Captain Emily Warner and the year was 1973.

When asked what advice she would give others to follow her lead as an airline pilot, she said, “When I make a decision, it has to be good for me, it has to be good for the company I work for, and it has to be good for women all over the world.

So, ask yourself – is the decision I make, good for me, good for my company and good for women truckers all over the world?

Whether you realize it or not, with every mile driven and every load delivered, you are paving the way for other women to succeed.

Thank you for making safety your number one priority and for the professionalism you show on our nation’s highways and roads.
Hats off to you, women drivers!

Now, its time to honor our award winners...