

Remarks by Bill Bronrott
FMCSA Deputy Administrator
National Training Center
Safety Investigator Academy Opening Day
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Introduction

Good morning. Thanks very much, Margie. I'm honored to be here with you on the ***first*** day of your FMCSA Safety Investigator training.

On behalf of Transportation Secretary LaHood and Administrator Anne Ferro, thank you for your willingness to serve our nation in this highest of callings -- saving lives.

I am here today not so much as FMCSA's Deputy Administrator, but rather as someone who has been down in the trenches for the past 3 decades chasing a vision of zero deaths on our roadways.

What got me on this path was meeting two moms whose lives were shattered at the hands of drunk drivers. One mom was from California. Her daughter was run over while walking to a church carnival; the other, a Maryland mom whose infant daughter was paralyzed from the shoulders down in a head-on crash.

At the time, I was an aide to a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. With his blessing, I organized a news conference to bring together these 2 grieving moms at the U.S. Capitol to give them a public forum to announce a new grassroots group they called MADD -- *Mothers Against Drunk Drivers* – and to launch a nationwide war on drunk driving.

That was 1980. And that passion for highway safety has driven me ever since.

Now, you are poised to become part of our Agency's vision of moving our nation toward zero deaths with respect to commercial motor vehicles.

Members of your class have traveled from 11 states. You have left challenging careers as state troopers, border patrolmen, border inspectors, compliance investigators, home builders, analysts, fire captains, and members of our military.

Although your backgrounds are varied, your path is now the same as you take on this new opportunity to have a direct influence over commercial vehicle safety.

You are embarking on 10 weeks of demanding training to prepare you for your new duties. This training has taken you away from home – from your family and friends. We thank you for your sacrifice and for your service.

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The next 10 weeks will be challenging. I hope they will be rewarding as you gain new skills and forge new friendships to carry you for many years to come.

FMCSA's Safety Mission

Our mission at FMCSA is simple: to prevent crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and commercial buses. Simple, but not easy.

For those of you who are new to FMCSA, you will, I hope, quickly learn that we pursue our mission by focusing our energies and efforts on 3 core principles:

- to raise the safety bar to enter the industry;
- to require carriers and drivers to maintain our safety standards;
and
- to remove high-risk carriers, drivers and vehicles from our roadways.

Everything we do, both in the field and at headquarters, can be tied back to these 3 principles.

How we do this involves a combination of policies and programs, rules and regulations, innovation and technology, outreach and partnerships, and education and enforcement. It's also about accountability and integrity.

And, while we have been making good progress and momentum in recent years, we can and must do better.

To make the point, let me ask you to do something. Starting with you, count down across your row from 1 to 11. Okay, now, all 11 of you please stand.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the number of people who, on an average day, were killed in crashes involving big trucks and commercial buses last year. 11 unsuspecting people who started their days, going about their business, and who didn't make it home that night to their families. 11 every day times 365 days for a total of nearly 4,000.

Now, multiple your 11 Academy colleagues by 22. That's the number who were injured -- nearly 250 -- on an average day. Nearly 90,000 injured plus 4,000 fatally injured. That is the equivalent to a sold-out standing room only crowd at the Dallas Cowboys Stadium. And that was just one year.

The good news is there is something we can do about it. And you are our best hope for getting our collective arms around this enormous challenge as we move forward.

The Role of Safety Investigators

As safety investigators, you will be joining a remarkable team that works tirelessly to identify and remove unsafe bus and truck companies, vehicles and drivers.

Every highway user will be counting on you to be their front-lines eyes and ears who won't compromise our safety-first promise.

They also will be expecting you to hold yourself to the highest standard of integrity and ethical behavior – and in turn, you should expect that of your leadership!

In public service, or in any profession, there is no higher calling than saving lives. And it's been said that "to save one life is as if you have saved the world."

For every person who will live because of your actions as a Safety Investigator, one family will stay intact and circles of friends will remain unbroken.

Introduction of Wanda Lindsay

No one understands this better than someone who has personally suffered the sudden loss of a loved one in a highway crash. No one can speak more directly to the critical importance of the work you are taking on than someone who has experienced this pain first-hand.

32 years ago it was two moms who stood up and said "enough" to the drunk driving epidemic. Thousands followed their lead, and a huge number of lives have been saved.

Over the past two decades, many relatives of truck crash victims have been channeling their grief and concern through the work of the Truck Safety Coalition.

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Today, we are very fortunate that one of the Coalition's volunteer members, Wanda Lindsay, is able to join us to talk about her personal loss and the critical importance of our staying true to our safety-first mission.

Please welcome to the podium Wanda Lindsay.

Thank you.

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