TRUCKING ALONG WITH ELECTRONIC LOGBOOKS (2016)

As technology has advanced through the years, commercial trucks have become lengthier, more powerful and they have higher payloads. This gives them the ability to move goods across Canada and North America more efficiently than ever. As the industry continues to remove costs and improve efficiencies on the equipment side, there will be more and more pressure for trucking companies to find competitive advantages in productivity including, in some cases, pushing their drivers harder and harder.

Of course, as a society, we want the most efficient and productive transportation system possible while continuing to ensure the health and safety of the industry; the workers employed within it; and the rest of society that interacts with it. With increased volume of goods and materials moved by commercial trucking each year, and a growing shortage of professional drivers, there is now, more than ever, reason for companies to increasingly push their drivers to get the loads delivered as fast as possible, with the least amount of downtime.

This problem can be reduced with the mandatory use of Electronic Onboard Recorders and driver electronic logging devices (ELDs) in all commercial vehicles. Not only will the ELD's enhance the safety of the drivers and public at large, it will level the playing field for all companies involved in the industry.

Background

Currently most commercial truck drivers are required to fill out a paper logbook to track their driving and on-duty time. The problem with this is that it is on the "honor system" and it is very easy to manipulate the logbook to show that the driver is not driving as many hours as they actually are. This issue often creates driver fatigue leading to the potential of an increase in accidents and companies promoting unsafe work practices.

The use of electronic logbooks will reduce the opportunities for companies to push their drivers beyond the legal hours of service.

As the technology has become more reliable and cost effective, many companies have voluntarily adopted the use of ELD's. This assists employers in ensuring compliance of regulations, helps to gather driver and vehicle information needed to build databases and provides clarity to help control operating costs and streamline operations.

Electronic Onboard Recorders (EOBR) are, in effect, the same as the "black boxes" well known in the airline industry. They are computers that connect to truck systems and collect data about the activity of the truck. This includes engine activity (rpm, braking, idle time, speeds, engine fault codes, etc.). They are often permanently installed in a particular truck and connected by wire or wirelessly to the truck Electronic Control Module (ECM) which extracts the data needed by the EOBR.

The ELD is either an extension of an existing EOBR system (an add-on), or it performs both functions. The ELD records a driver's personal activity while using the truck (which may be all of the activity of the truck unless companies use multiple drivers on the same truck). Essentially, drivers are required to login to the ELD when they begin their day, and log out to end their day.

The ELD records all driver activity throughout their shift including things like driving time, load/unload time, safety checks, off-duty time, as well as their off-duty time between shifts. Because modern ELD systems utilize GPS, many of these activities are recorded automatically. For instance, drivers cannot manipulate driving time on

their ELD because, if the truck is moving, the GPS system will put the driver on-duty, driving and record the distance travelled automatically.

Some in the trucking industry contend that ELD technology is too expensive, particularly for small, independent operators. In the past, that may have been a valid argument. Today, however, ELD technology has significantly decreased in price and systems that operate on a tablet or smart phone are available for as little as $300 each, with an additional monthly charge of as little as $25 for the required data plan.

Besides a reduction in the cost of compliance for trucking companies (internal auditing of manual logbooks, fines for non-compliance, etc.) EOBR and ELD technology provide companies with additional information for improving operational efficiencies, including GPS tracking of equipment; 2-way communication; fuel consumption information; idle time calculation; cycle/trip time data; speed monitoring; etc.). A typical payback on an EOBR/ELD investment can be as little as 6-18 months.

Conclusion

On Feb 16, 2016, the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA) said that officials from Transport Minister Marc Garneau's office, confirmed media reports suggesting that the new federal government would move forward to replace current requirements for truck drivers to complete paper log books, with a mandate that trucks instead be equipped with ELDs as the standard mechanism for monitoring, auditing and enforcing compliance with national hours of service regulations. While Transport Canada cannot give a firm date for introduction of the regulations at this time, it is expected to align implementation as closely as possible to the timetable for similar measures in the U.S. – late 2017 or early 2018.[1]

While the U.S. have mandated that transition from paper to electronic logs is to be required by December 18, 2017, with some development exceptions, Canada has yet to institute a timetable to their expression of support to ELDs. Canadian drivers operating in the U.S. will be similarly impacted by U.S. requirements.

While the federal government has announced it will mandate the Electronic Logbooks by the end of 2017 or early 2018, the provincial governments across Canada are mixed about supporting the requirement.

ELDs would not change driver hours of service, only the way hours of service are recorded.
The ELDs will not only enhance safety of both the drivers and the public, but give commercial vehicle inspectors an ability to easily enforce the current regulations.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government:

1. Follow the commitment made by the federal government (Feb 16, 2016) to mandate the installation and use of Electronic Logging Devices (ELD) in all commercial vehicles excepting those vehicles and/or drivers that may be deemed exempt from the use of such devices;

2. Adopt the same technical standard for what constitutes a compliant Electronic Logging Device (EDL) as will be established and enforced by the Federal Government; and

1 cantruck.ca/feds-confirm-commitment-to-introducing-e-logs-and-e-stability-control-for-trucks/

3. Support a position of mandating ELD's on the same timetable as the Federal Government, in all provinces across the country.