

When will government safety agencies finally succeed in getting rules in place aimed at getting proper rest for fatigued truck drivers?

Fatigued drivers are a major cause of truck accidents in Pennsylvania and across the country. For far too long, however, the trucking has resisted federal efforts to create stricter limitations on the number of hours that truckers can legally drive before taking a break.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is scheduled to finalize new rules on truck drivers' hours of service by July 26. The rules would then be implemented later this year.

Under current law, a truck driver can work up to 60 hours in seven days. The limit for an 8-day period is 70 hours. Once those limits are reached, drivers must be off duty for at least 34 consecutive hours. That 34-hour break restarts the drivers' work week.

The new rules proposed by the FMCSA specify more detailed requirements for the 34-hour period. That period would have to contain two separate off-duty periods from midnight to 6 a.m. In addition, drivers could use the 34-hour restart period only one time in any seven-day period.

Besides the overnight rest periods, the new rules would also require a 30-minute break after seven hours and reduce allowable drive time during a 14-hour shift from 11 hours to ten.

Henry Jasny, general counsel for the respected safety group Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, says stricter rules are needed to allow drivers to rest. He is right; more rest for drivers means less fatigue and fewer truck accidents.

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