

CDC *Vital Signs* Town Hall Teleconference  
Q&A

Keeping Truckers Safe on the Road  
March 10, 2015  
2:00 pm (EDT)

Dr. Rich Schieber: And thank you very much. That was very, very good all of you. Thank you Stephanie and thank you Terry and thank you Mike. So again to get in the queue to ask a question press star 1. Say your name when prompted. And the operator will tell you when it's your turn. We have about 20 minutes. That's a good amount of time.

I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to share your strategies, your lessons learned, your challenges, and your successes. And I will also note that what's the count of people?

We have about almost 70 people on the line and some are from corporations that are heavy in trucking, some are from trucking organizations, some are state health departments, some are insurers, and some are universities. So it's quite a blend. And let's get started. Operator, do we have any questions in line?

Coordinator: At this time there are no questions. But just as a reminder if you would like to ask a question please press star 1 and record your first and last name, clearly when prompted. Your name is required to introduce your question. To withdraw your question you may press star 2. And once again if you would like to ask a question please press star 1. One moment please for our first question.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Okay so while you get your questions queued up and by the way I'm hard to stop on a roll like this. Let me ask you Stephanie why do you think truck drivers don't use their seat belts? What has research told us?

Dr. Stephanie Pratt: Thanks, Rich. I - there are several reasons why truck drivers don't use their belts. I should start out by saying that our survey did not ask this question but we can draw from the scientific literature to come up with some insights about that.

There may simply be the personal choice not to use a belt. Despite the fact that Mike alluded to the fact that not using a belt or breaking the other rules means you don't work for Shell. There may be some employers where the consequences are not the same as at Shell.

There could also be attitudes about the fact that the sheer mass of the truck might prevent truck drivers in a crash making belts unnecessary. There might be some drivers who make frequent stops and think it's just too inconvenient or takes too much time to buckle up all the time.

And there are - there is some indication that employer policies not doing enough to promote belt use might be an issue. For example, there was a survey done about ten years ago where almost half of truck drivers said that their employers didn't have any penalties if they didn't use their belts and they didn't offer any educational or incentive programs to promote belt use.

A third group of reasons is related to the fact that seat belts just might not be comfortable for some truck drivers to use. There's research that suggests discomfort related to the positioning of the belt. It might be too tight. It might inhibit the range of motion, or it might rub or chafe.

Also we at NIOSH recently collected data on the body dimensions of a nationally representative sample of almost 2,000 truck drivers. And we found that truck drivers were on average 30 to 35 pounds heavier than people of the same age in the general population.

And our survey that we did of truck drivers corroborated those types of results. We saw high problems of obesity among the truck drivers we surveyed at truck stops as well.

The new data that we collected on body dimensions of truck drivers are now being used by vehicle manufacturers to design new truck cabs that are a better fit for the drivers of today. And this would include more comfortable belts.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Thank you. Let me ask a quick follow-up question and put you on the spot for a second Stephanie. If you were to recommend one change of those four main areas that you thought needed attention which one do you think that would be?

Dr. Stephanie Pratt: I think the most critical element is to support regulations through employer programs. And I think that many of the points that Mike brought up really testify to that.

Yes, we've had regulations in place since 1970 that require truck drivers to wear their seat belts. One in six still don't use them but employer policies can support, can reinforce, they can include an educational element, they can include monitoring elements, as Mike described with in-vehicle monitoring.

So those - that really is the key, rather than doing anything to change the regulations. It's an issue of employers taking the opportunity to intervene.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Very good. Operator?

Coordinator: Yes we do have a question from David Melton from Liberty Mutual. Your line is open.

David Melton: Thank you. Mike this is a question for you regarding your mobile device policy. How do you enforce that? Not necessarily just with the drivers but with your dispatch team, driver managers, and so forth to prevent them from calling when they know that they have a load on the road?

Mike Watson: Right. For our heavy good vehicle truck drivers our basic policy is engine on phone off. Now this - obviously you have certain types of drivers that have certain loads that could be diverted or change and this is where journey management comes into play where we have set rest locations.

In some cases those could be as frequent as 30 to every 45 minutes where a driver does pull off the road to check for messages, etc. But a lot of it depends on the truck driver and what kind of journey they're doing.

But the basic policy we try to do is engine on phone off. Now how do we enforce that? Obviously it's difficult to do but whenever there is a crash obviously phone records are reviewed and checked as well.

Now the trucking companies' management are all familiar with the policy etc. So their employees do not contact the truck drivers, other truck drivers do not contact one another etc.

But the basic enforcement that we use whenever there is a crash this is part of the investigation. And word of mouth does get out quickly when people do actually lose their jobs because they chose to use their phone. At least they still have their life but they may not have a job.

David Melton: Thank you.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Dr. Bunn I'd like to ask you a question about your FACE program. So that has lots of stakeholders. Can you tell me how you're able to get buy in from this wide variety of stakeholders?

Dr. Terry Bunn: Persistence. We made sure that we are highly invested in learning the reasons for what they do. We learn more about their concerns, their needs. We attend to their own meetings - not only invite them to attend ours but we attend their meetings as well.

We've even ridden with drivers so that we can actually learn the day-to-day tasks that are performed by both short haul and long haul truck drivers. And last, we make sure that they know that we're working with them and not against them.

I mean the whole purpose of fatality reports is to provide practical, useful recommendations. And the Kentucky Trucking Association has been just wonderful in that they review our reports to provide that feedback to us on whether the recommendations that we're thinking of developing when a fatality occurs is feasible and practical.

We want to make sure that we are recommending something that's within their realm of possibilities, no restrictions associated with it, and take into account their labor needs.

Dr. Rich Schieber: So first think to understand, then to be understood.

Dr. Terry Bunn: Yes.

Dr. Rich Schieber: That's really great for a coalition leader to have. That is really great. Mike, let me ask you what you would recommend if - let me take two examples you can handle them any way you wish.

If you had a relatively small company that had a lot of trucking miles say versus a large company such as yourself - how should they begin if they're seeking to make the kind and magnitude of changes that you've seen using the kind of methodologies that you've put forth successfully?

Mike Watson: Right. Now that's a great question. I think whether it be a small company or a large company the first thing is the top management leadership commitment aspect—that they're not going to tolerate people getting hurt, tolerate crashes in the organization.

So it's really putting together a simple policy and commitment statement of duty and care for people. And that's not only their own drivers but also people in the community.

Number two - whenever there is an incident, it's very important to investigate that crash and understand the causes of the incident. Number three - when you put together a road safety management system it's very

important, particularly for small companies to keep it simple. Don't over complicate it, okay.

Our Shell program is extremely simple. It's tailored towards maybe education three because we're dealing with many countries where drivers have no education whatsoever.

So it's extremely important to keep it simple, focus on some of the key measures, seat belt compliance number one, you know. Fifty percent fatalities globally can be reduced if people just had on a seat belt.

Number two, you know, fatigue, driver distraction. You know, focus on some of these basic issues that can really make some dividends for your business. But if you make it too complicated, nothing's going to happen.

NETS, which is an organization that Stephanie and I both work with have created a very simple comprehensive guide to put together a fleet management system. It's available for anyone on the web at no cost whatsoever. And it's a great starting point for people to look at.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Okay thank you. And again, there will be a transcript for people to look at if they want to review those recommendations. Just a shout out, there was a gentleman from NETS on the line. If that person is still there, would he like to say something? Operator can you release that line so we can hear it?

Coordinator: Yes I can. If that person could press star 1 and I'll be able to open that line.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Well they must have liked everything we've said so far. Sorry.

Mike Watson: Well just for people's information NETS stands for the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety. And both Stephanie and I are on the board of directors for NETS.

It has about 100 private sector companies throughout the world. Many of them are Fortune 500 type companies. But there's also some very small companies. And it's really around sharing best practices, doing some benchmarking, etc.

So, it's a very worthwhile organization. If you haven't heard about it I'm more than happy to send you the link to gain more information about it or Stephanie could do the same.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Yes and I know it's a good link. I've seen it. Mike, you've done some evaluations that are quite powerful. Let me ask you in brief have you looked at the number of crashes or turnovers, particularly if you have them segmented by inter - rural - sorry - intra-city freeways? I mean that's what really gets the average driver steamed up trying to get home. Have you looked at the number of crashes and if so have they changed with this - these changes in policies since '09?

Mike Watson: Yes, very much so. We've seen a very large impact on our number of crashes going down particularly in the city environment because of the focus on driving behavior.

So, you know, many, many of us as drivers lose our patience. And your true personality starts to come out. So how do you control those emotions and patience as a truck driver?

So the driver behavioral tool we use is extremely important in helping with the behaviors. But also, you know, reminding people about the driver distractions that are out there whether they be eating while driving, you know, sipping on a drink, and adjusting the climate control.

You know, obviously the biggest one is texting and driving which is a major, major issue. You know, we've got to get our arms around that to stop the madness of the texting and driving because it is overtaking things.

Now in the rural type deliveries that our truck drivers are doing - these are the longer distances. Obviously this is where fatigue is a major issue. And this is where we have some very tight controls around driving duty and work rest hours to help us manage fatigue.

Also, we have a policy - any driver whether they be a Shell employee or a contractor if they feel fatigued they can basically raise a yellow card which allows them not to drive. And we're not going to force them to drive to put themselves at risk or other people at risk.

Dr. Rich Schieber: That's great. Operator I see we have someone from NETS online?

Coordinator: Yes we do have a question from Jack Hanley from the Network of Employees for Traffic Safety. Your line is open.

Jack Hanley: Thank you. Can you hear me?

Dr. Rich Schieber: Yes.

Dr. Stephanie Pratt: Yes.

Jack Hanley: Okay excellent. I heard my name about three minutes ago so I called into the operator. I suppose the significant comment for me is that venues like the one you're conducting right now are so important.

We just did an analysis for the US of the top 500 largest occupational fleets. Now these - this doesn't include heavy duty trucks but think of passenger vehicles for sales reps. And the NETS' counts has about 36 members among those 500.

Well it's wonderful for the 36 but it brings to my attention just how many are out there who have not yet, as far as I can tell, realized the significance of road safety as a business strategic objective and goes hand-in-hand with safety, employee safety, discipline, but also good business.

Dr. Rich Schieber: That is - those are good words. Thank you.

Jack Hanley: You're welcome.

Dr. Rich Schieber: I'll remind you we still have about five minutes. Time for a couple more questions to get in. Question for Stephanie please. Can you tell us more about the restraints that are used for sleeper berth passengers and explain a bit more about that controlled study that you did; it sounded like a match control - if you could explain that just a bit and take it from there.

Dr. Stephanie Pratt: Rich I'm going to pump that to Terry. That's her study and she is the person on the call who knows the most about sleeper berths and what the safety issues are.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Great. Thank you.

Dr. Terry Bunn: Hi. Yes we did this study looking at about 700 collisions in Kentucky in 2013 and looked at injuries versus non-injuries in semi-truck collisions and found that those - no matter whether they were in the driver's seat or in the sleeper berth if they were not using the seat belts then they were much more likely to - almost two and a half times more likely to have - or to be injured in a semi-truck collision.

Basically the FMCSA has required the installation of occupant restraints in sleeper berths since 1971. And in fact they even go as far to say that they have to be designed, installed, and maintained to withstand the minimum total force of 6,000 pounds applied to the front of the vehicle and parallel to the longitudinal axis of the vehicle.

In my mind, this is a great regulation but in order to - just from what we've seen from crash reports in Kentucky, even police officers who are responding to crashes when they cite or record seat belt installation within these vehicles they're saying in the sleeper berths that restraints are not even installed when we know that in fact they have to be installed per FMC regulations, since 1971.

So we know then that they're probably being pushed underneath the mattress or just cut away from and just not even being used. So what we're really advocating for here is the use of those sleeper berth occupant restraints even though they're not mandated now but it's, you know, it's the right thing to do.

Dr. Stephanie Pratt: Rich could I just make a follow-up comment about the use of restraints?

The sleeper berth - this is Stephanie. The issues are - the issues of the sleeper berth are really important and as Terry said there's clearly a gap there in the regulations and in the enforcement.

Another issue, that we identified when we looked at the regulations and the crash data, is the fact that we've been talking about how drivers are required to wear seat belts. The regulation applies to drivers. It really doesn't speak to passengers in large trucks wearing their seat belts while they're riding in the front or back - a back compartment of the vehicle.

So when we looked at the data we talked about how nearly 700 large truck drivers and passengers died in crashes in 2012. Well over 100 of that 700 were indeed passengers. We typically think about the solo large truck driver but in reality there is a substantial fatality burden on the passengers.

So we have to think not just about requiring the driver to wear the seat belt but everyone in the truck. And that's where the employer policy is so key because it's filling the gap between what the regulations are and what we would actually want to achieve safety-wise.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Thank you. Thanks for that add on. That's a - let me ask Mike a question.

Mike, when I drive on the freeway - probably a common occurrence of passenger drivers - I commonly see two trucks in close proximity at high speed one following the other.

To the non-truck driver this seems dangerous but in reality - do you have many crashes from that? And is this one way that the second truck can draft the first truck?

Mike Watson: Right. We actually discourage that practice at Shell. Many truckers do this in convoys - not only two trucks but sometimes four or six trucks. In general it puts the general public more at risk because of the fear factor of navigating in and out of these trucks, etc.

So we discourage the practice. We do, you know, advocate a four second rule. That's the following distance to allow the vehicles get in and out around trucks.

But I am with you. It is very dangerous when you get many trucks in a convoy type maneuver and it's a practice that we try to discourage in our operations. And some of our operations, you know, truck traffic may be 200 trucks a day and all of a sudden the oil industry comes to a community and you've got 1,600 trucks.

And this is putting a major impact on the community. So you've got to reduce that impact. And one of the key things we do is avoid trucks on the road at school hours, you know, to and from school and avoid the convoys because it does create greater safety risks for the public, particularly around the blind spots of the trucks - what the trucks can and cannot see, etc.

Dr. Rich Schieber: Yes I guess that song from the '70s - Convoy - didn't do you guys any good with the close convoy driving and the CB radios for distraction. But it's not played much on the radio anymore.

That's it. Before we close let me take a moment and ask you to look at the next to last slide, slide 40. I want to talk about the prevention status reports, the PSRs.

This is for all 50 states and DC and it gives us the status of certain policies and practices designed to address ten public health problems which includes motor vehicle injuries.

It pulls together information about state policies and practices in a simple easy to use format for decision makers and gives your ideas about areas for improvement. And there's a direct link to the 2013 Motor Vehicle Safety PSR on the March *Vital Signs* Town Hall Conference web page. Finally, let us know how you think we can improve these teleconferences. E-mail your suggestions to OSTLTS - [ostltsfeedback@cdc.gov](mailto:ostltsfeedback@cdc.gov).

We hope you'll be able to join us for next month's Town Hall which will be on April 14 at 2:00 when we focus on teen pregnancy and use of long acting reversible contraceptives. Thanks to our presenters. Thanks to everyone who attended the call and your interest in this. And that ends today's call.  
Goodbye.

Coordinator: Again this now concludes today's conference. All participants may disconnect at this time.