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VTTI conducts study to evaluate the safety impact of the Hours-of-Service Regulations for Commercial Motor Vehicle drivers

February 26, 2008-BLACKSBURG, Va. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Office of Analysis, Research and Technology recently hosted an online forum highlighting the results of a recent FMCSA-funded study that analyzed risk as a function of driving hours 1 through 11.

The study also looked at how critical incidents may vary as a function of driving shift and time of day. This webinar presented an in-depth review of the study procedures and results by Dr. Richard Hanowski, Director of the Center for Truck & Bus Safety at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), and gave participants the opportunity to ask questions about them.

The webinar was open to all interested parties, including carriers and their safety managers, FMCSA headquarters and field staff, and all of FMCSA's state parties. The event had over 100 participants in attendance and was rated highly on content, structure, information gained and expertise of research staff at VTTI.

FMCSA funded the study to examine some important issues pertaining to the hours-of-service debate, particularly with regard to time-on-task or driving-hours. Specifically, the results from the analysis on critical-incident relative frequency generally showed no statistical difference in the hours between the 2nd through 11th driving-hours. That is, the results of this study do not support the hypothesis that there is an increased risk resulting from commercial motor vehicle drivers driving in the 11th driving-hour as compared to the 10th driving-hour, or any hour.

In fact, a significant spike in the rate of critical incidents was found during the 1st driving-hour and was found across many different analyses. Additional analyses found a strong time-of-day effect which, upon closer examination, appeared to have resulted from hour-by-hour traffic density variations.

Driving Transportation with Technology

The study authors hypothesized that exposure to heavy traffic conditions, and possibly sleep inertia and an increase in complex driving situations that may be typical in the 1st driving-hour, may have influenced the increase in critical-incidents recorded in the 1st driving-hour.

FMCSA's primary mission is to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. FMCSA is headquartered in Washington, DC and employs more than 1,000 individuals, in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, dedicated to improving bus and truck safety and saving lives. Their website is <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/>.

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