

TRUCK TALK

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Text Messaging

The transportation industry has come to rely heavily on electronic devices to enable drivers, dispatchers, and essentially every aspect of our industry to do their job more efficiently and effectively. Just take a look at the advances made in the last 5 years. Just imagine what may be coming in the next 5 years.

However, with the efficiency and convenience of using electronic devices comes responsibility. It is very easy to become distracted from the performance of your primary job function while using a cell phone or other device. In an effort to curb the frequency and severity of accidents caused by distracted driving, the Department of Transportation recently took steps to make certain aspects of distracted driving unlawful.

On January 26, 2010, Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood issued an order immediately forbidding commercial drivers from texting on hand-held mobile devices and instituted steep fines for violators. He called the step the "latest in a series of actions the Department of Transportation is taking to curb distracted driving and help our roads become much safer".

LaHood said drivers found to be using a hand-held device to read or send a text message will be subject to fines of as much as \$2750.00.

20 states have already enacted legislation making texting while driving by any driver illegal. As a professional driver of a commercial motor vehicle, you have always been held to a higher standard, and fortunately you have always been up to the challenge. Most motor carriers have had safety programs and policies in place for years banning such activity; we all know texting while driving is dangerous, and now it is more than just a bad idea, it is against the law.

As you are aware by now, FMCSA is instituting a new safety initiative called CSA 2010. A HUGE part of CSA 2010 is assessing driver on-the-road performance. The regulation the Department of Transportation is using for the ban on text messaging is part 390.17: "Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit the use of additional equipment and accessories...provided such equipment and accessories do not decrease the safety of operation of the commercial motor vehicles on which they are used". You can be assured that enforcement officials will be on the lookout for opportunities to enforce the ban on text messaging.

One other thing – your cell phone bill makes it very easy to determine if you were talking or texting on your cell phone at the time of an accident. The ramification of this is obvious.

What can you do to avoid getting caught up in the texting ban frenzy?

- Never, never, never ever send text or read text messages while you are driving.
- Do not talk on your cell phone while the vehicle is in motion.
- On in-coming calls, let your message center take the call, then check the message after you have pulled off the road and are parked in a safe location.



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