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Remarks for the Sleep Apnea and Trucking Conference

 [Sleep-Apnea-Truck-Conf.pdf](#)

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Sleep Apnea and Trucking Conference
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Introduction

I am thrilled to be here on behalf of all the FMCSA employees who are committed to the discussion taking place at the sleep apnea trucking conference.

FMCSA's core mission is safety. We are dedicated to eliminating crashes and fatalities on our roadways.

There isn't a single silver bullet solution to this complex problem. What it is going to take is silver buckshot. We need to rely on a range of integrated strategies to help us achieve our safety mission. For FMCSA, that is a mix of research, regulations, enforcement, grants to states and public outreach.

To do this, with a clear framework, is our three core priorities which are to 1) raise the bar to enter the motor carrier industry, 2) maintain high safety standards to remain in the industry, and 3) remove high-risk carriers, drivers and service providers from operating.

I count fatigue among those high risk behaviors and sleep apnea is a condition that contributes to fatigue. This is a highly sensitive subject which is why this meeting is so important. The challenge here is to focus on sleep apnea as a serious medical condition and identify affordable screening and treatments that work in the truck driving environment.

Effect on Truck Drivers

In many cases, truck drivers experience poor health because of the challenges associated with their job and lifestyle.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average life expectancy for a driver is less than 61 years – is 16 years younger than the average American. That is simply not acceptable.

From our own estimates, almost three out of 10 truck drivers currently suffer from mild to severe sleep apnea. And we know from our research that drivers with severe sleep apnea are known to be at a much, much greater risk of being involved in a severe crash.

Fatigue is estimated to be an associated factor in 13 percent of all truck crashes annually and 28 percent of single vehicle truck crashes, based on the Large Truck Crash Causation Study.

Making the Roads Safer - Screening

We strive every day to identify and remove tired commercial vehicle drivers from the road because they are a threat to safety. We know that sleep apnea symptoms interfere with safe driving, and that drivers do not make good judgment calls when they are tired.

Keeping Drivers Healthy - Treatment

Once sleep apnea is diagnosed, doctors can prescribe treatment options that may start out with a change in lifestyle or require other treatments.

No doubt we will be discussing a recent study by the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine that has shown that effective treatment for sleep apnea can lower health care costs and disability rates. In this study, costs were compared for 156 drivers who received continuous positive airway pressure or other treatment for sleep apnea.

Finding Solutions

We congratulate industry leaders like Don Osterberg, Vice President for Schneider National. Don is a real safety champion and a leader in demonstrating that programs to screen, diagnose, treat and monitor drivers at risk of sleep apnea can improve drivers' lives and save lives.

It is solutions like the program Don leads that can take us in the direction we need to go. I challenge other carriers out there, and members of the sleep industry, to set the bar as high as Schneider has done.

We must also recognize the challenges faced by small trucking companies and owner operators who can't leverage the economies of scale of larger operators. That is why it is even more important that we come up with new solutions that work for everyone.

Conclusion

We hope this conference will spark a new collaboration to foster awareness about sleep apnea among drivers, the medical community and carriers alike.

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We encourage carriers to screen their drivers and for the drivers to seek treatment if treatment is not offered by the carrier. We need to be mindful of striking a balance between effective and affordable treatment so that it is within reach of those who need it.

The point really is to treat sleep apnea so that the health of the driver is improved and lives are saved. What we all want are rested and productive drivers and safer roads as a result.

Thank you all.

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