



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

STATEMENT OF JOAN CLAYBROOK, CHAIR
CITIZENS FOR RELIABLE AND SAFE HIGHWAYS (CRASH)

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I am here today representing the Truck Safety Coalition, a partnership of Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) to lend our support to Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood's action to ban cell phone texting by drivers of commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce. Our organizations representing victims of truck crashes believes that no driver should be distracted while driving, especially when operating a commercial truck or bus. Operators of giant trucks weighing 80,000 pounds and passenger buses carrying up to 55 people should not have anything on their minds except safe driving, and nothing in their hands except the steering wheel. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation over 5,800 people were killed and 515,000 injured in distracted driving crashes in 2008. We need to put a stop to this epidemic. That is why the Truck Safety Coalition supports Secretary LaHood in announcing federal action to curb texting while operating commercial motor vehicles.

Texting requires a person to focus attention on the text messaging device, distracting attention from the roadway to the airwaves. No one can operate a motor vehicle safely when their eyes, hands or mind are not focused on the driving task and safe vehicle operation. This is all the more true in the case of trucks and buses. There is no place for texting when a split second distraction can result in tractor-trailer jackknife, a motorcoach rollover, or a collision with a family in a passenger car. For that reason, the Truck Safety Coalition calls for a ban on driver distractions and supports Secretary LaHood's action today to start banning texting by commercial vehicle drivers.

Today's agency guidance, in conjunction with distracted driving Summit and President Obama's Executive Order 13513 issued on October 1, 2009, prohibiting texting by government employees while operating motor vehicles, is a good start, but it is just a start in tackling the problem of commercial vehicle safety. On average about 5,000 people are killed and another 100,000 people are injured each year in truck crashes. While some of these are the result of distracted driving and texting, there are many other causes including driver fatigue and excessively large trucks. That is why we also need comprehensive federal regulation and tough Congressional legislation to improve truck safety.