

TALKING POINTS PREPARED FOR
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
AT THE NATIONAL MOTOR CARRIER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 24, 1985

* I AM ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO BE INVITED HERE TODAY AND I KNOW THAT RAY BARNHART AND KEN PIERSON JOIN ME IN THANKING YOU FOR THE SUPERB JOB YOU HAVE DONE ON THIS COMMITTEE.

* LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WELCOME TOM DONOHUE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP. I HAVE KNOWN AND ADMIRER TOM SINCE HE WAS WITH THE U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND I WAS THE PRESIDENT'S ASSISTANT FOR PUBLIC LIAISON.

* HE WAS ESPECIALLY SUPPORTIVE OF MY CHOICE OF DICK LANDIS, WHO IS ALSO WITH US TODAY, AS ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR MOTOR CARRIERS.

* AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, THIS COMMITTEE IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO ME AS IT TOUCHES MY HIGHEST PRIORITY -- SAFETY. AND THE TIMING OF

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THIS MEETING IS MOST APPROPRIATE AS WE ARE CONSIDERING A NUMBER OF SAFETY INITIATIVES.

* AND AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY DOES NOT TAKE A BACK SEAT TO ANY OTHER SAFETY ISSUE.

* OUR DATA INDICATES A GROWING NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING HEAVY TRUCKS.

* WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS AN INCREASING PROBLEM WITH UNSAFE DRIVERS AND UNSAFE TRUCKS WHICH WE PROPOSE TO TACKLE ON A NUMBER OF FRONTS.

* TRUCKS ARE NOW INVOLVED IN 12 PERCENT OF ALL FATAL ACCIDENTS EVEN THOUGH THEY ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN FOUR PERCENT OF THE TOTAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC.

* THE MAJORITY OF ALL HEAVY TRUCK ACCIDENTS INVOLVE COLLISIONS WITH ANOTHER VEHICLE; MOST ACCIDENTS OCCUR ON WEEKDAYS BETWEEN 6:00 A.M. AND 6:00 P.M. -- WHEN MOST PEOPLE ARE ON THE ROADS -- AND ABOUT HALF OF ALL PEOPLE IN CARS INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTS WITH TRUCKS ARE INJURED, WHILE ONLY 10 PERCENT OF ALL TRUCK DRIVERS ARE INJURED.

* THE 5,523 FATALITIES RESULTING FROM ACCIDENTS IN 1983 WERE ALMOST TWICE THE TOTAL REPORTED FOR ALL NON-HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS COMBINED.

* SOME OF THESE ACCIDENTS ARE RELATED TO THE CONDITION OF THE VEHICLE.

* IN 1984, 74 PERCENT OF THE VEHICLES WE SELECTED FOR INSPECTION WERE IN VIOLATION OF THE FEDERAL REGULATIONS. A TOTAL OF 30 PERCENT

OF THE VEHICLES INSPECTED AND 10 PERCENT OF THE DRIVERS WERE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY REMOVED FROM SERVICE.

* OTHERS MAY BE RELATED TO MANAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT ATTITUDES.

* OF THE 4,400 SAFETY MANAGEMENT AUDITS CONDUCTED LAST YEAR, ONLY 45 PERCENT RESULTED IN "SATISFACTORY" SAFETY FITNESS RATINGS.

* WE CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT -- WE MUST DO BETTER THAN THAT. AND ONLY UNITED THROUGH A FEDERAL, STATE, INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY ALLIANCE CAN WE SUCCESSFULLY IMPROVE THE TRUCK SAFETY RECORD.

* INTERNALLY, WE HAVE BEGUN A REORGANIZATION OF THE MOTOR CARRIER FUNCTION WITHIN FHWA. THIS HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE FIELD AND IS IMMINENT IN THE WASHINGTON, D.C. HEADQUARTERS. DICK'S APPOINTMENT IS THE FIRST STEP IN THIS INITIATIVE, AND SHOULD STRENGTHEN THE

BUREAU OF MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY. FROM NOW ON, OUR REGIONAL OFFICERS AROUND THE COUNTRY WILL REPORT DIRECTLY TO HIM.

* EXTERNALLY, WE ARE FORGING A FEDERAL-STATE PARTNERSHIP IN ADDRESSING SAFETY ISSUES THROUGH THE MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. AS YOU KNOW, THIS PROGRAM PROVIDES FEDERAL FUNDS TO ENHANCE STATE MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ACTIVITIES.

* I INTEND TO SUPPORT A SEVERAL-FOLD INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR THIS PROGRAM.

* BY VIRTUE OF THIS PROGRAM, 28 STATES HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR MOTOR CARRIER INSPECTION PROGRAMS AND THEREFORE WILL BE ABLE TO FIELD 3,000 MORE INSPECTORS, A 3-FOLD INCREASE. ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAM IS NOT YET A YEAR AND A HALF OLD, WE EXPECT IT TO INCREASE SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

* STATES WHICH HAVE INCREASED THEIR INSPECTORS HAVE EXPERIENCED THE FOLLOWING:

- WISCONSIN FOUND THAT 39 PERCENT OF ALL TRUCKS INSPECTED HAD BRAKE SYSTEM VIOLATIONS;
- MICHIGAN DISCOVERED THAT A QUARTER OF THE TRUCKS ON ITS ROADS HAD MAJOR SAFETY DEFECTS; AND,
- IN GEORGIA, INJURIES FROM ACCIDENTS INVOLVING TRUCKS DECREASED 41 PERCENT.

* MOST OF YOU ARE AWARE THAT WE JUST INTRODUCED A TRUCKING DEREGULATION BILL, BUT THIS WILL NOT AFFECT SAFETY REGULATIONS.

* WE ARE REISSUING THE FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY REGULATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 1984 MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ACT. THIS WILL

ALLOW US TO STREAMLINE AND RESOLVE CONFLICTING RULES AND INTERPRETATIONS AS WELL AS ASSISTING STATE AND INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE.

* THIS FALL THE BMCS IN COOPERATION WITH SEVERAL STATES WILL PILOT TEST SAFETY NET, A COMPUTER NETWORK TO ENABLE ROADSIDE INSPECTORS TO CHECK ON A DRIVER'S VIOLATION HISTORY DURING ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS.

* AND FOR THE FIRST TIME FEDERAL AND STATE INSPECTORS WILL BE ABLE TO USE THEIR NEW CIVIL PENALTY AUTHORITY TO PROSECUTE EQUIPMENT VIOLATIONS.

* THE INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS I HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING WITH YOU ARE CRUCIAL TO OUR SAFETY EFFORT. BUT THERE IS AN INHERENT PROBLEM IN THE LICENSING SYSTEM OF THE INDUSTRY WHICH WE MUST MOVE TO CORRECT.

* IN MANY STATES, TRUCK DRIVERS NEED NOT PASS A SPECIAL TEST, WRITTEN OR ROAD, TO PROVE COMPETENCY ON THE VEHICLES THEY DRIVE.

* ANOTHER SERIOUS DEFICIENCY IN THE CURRENT LICENSING AND REGULATORY SYSTEM IS THE EASE WITH WHICH DRIVERS CAN OBTAIN MULTIPLE LICENSES AND, THUS, MULTIPLE RECORDS.

* REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROBLEM IS THE CASE OF A TRUCK DRIVER TRAVELING THROUGH VIRGINIA WHOSE SEMITRAILER STRUCK A ROCK EMBANKMENT, RUPTURING THE TANK SHELL AND CAUSING THE CARGO OF PROPANE TO ESCAPE, VAPORIZE AND IGNITE. THE TRUCK DRIVER AND ANOTHER PERSON WERE KILLED, FIVE OTHERS WERE INJURED, AND A HOUSE AND 12 ACRES OF WOODLAND WERE DESTROYED IN THE EXPLOSION AND FIRE.

* IT WAS REVEALED THAT THE TRUCK DRIVER HELD DRIVERS LICENSES FROM TWO DIFFERENT STATES.

* THESE LICENSES WERE OBTAINED BY FALSIFYING INFORMATION. IN A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD, THE DRIVER HAD FOUR ACCIDENTS, SIX TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS AND ONE SUSPENSION.

* AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, WE WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK AT ALTERNATIVES FOR INDUCING STATES TO ADOPT CLASSIFIED LICENSE AND ONE-DRIVER, ONE-LICENSE CONCEPTS, AND TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE NON-RESIDENT VIOLATORS COMPACT (ONLY 12 STATES ARE CURRENTLY MEMBERS--THEY EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON VIOLATORS).

* WHILE I KNOW THAT INDUSTRY AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS ARE FOCUSING ON THIS PROBLEM, I WOULD GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR INITIATIVE AND COOPERATION IN THIS OR ANY OTHER TRUCK SAFETY AREA.

* I NEED YOUR HELP, YOUR IDEAS, AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT.

* YOUR PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL IN RAISING THE VISIBILITY OF THE MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY PROGRAMS AND IN PROVIDING LEADERSHIP TO THE EMERGING FEDERAL/STATE/INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP FOR COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SAFETY.

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