

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20591

REMARKS OF  
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BEFORE THE  
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
TEXAS MOTOR TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION, INC.  
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS  
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FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION AND MOTOR CARRIER

I was very pleased when Terry Townsend and Jimmie Boyd suggested that I speak to you concerning the new Department of Transportation and, more specifically, the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, in the Federal Highway Administration. It is, of course, a real pleasure to come back home and have the opportunity to renew acquaintances with my old friends and make some new ones.

April 1, 1967, was a significant date in transportation. As you know, that date is traditionally "April Fool's Day." It is also the day before my birthday. There are also other reasons why this date is important to transportation.

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April 1 marks the 30th anniversary of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. On April 1, the Department of Transportation became a reality. On this date the I. C. C. Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, by order, were made the Federal Highway Administration's Regulations. On this date, the I. C. C. Motor Carrier Safety Staff became Federal Highway Administration employees. Finally, on this date, all highway safety programs relating to vehicles, drivers, and the highways themselves, were placed under the very able direction of Lowell K. Bridwell, the first Federal Highway Administrator in this nation's first Department of Transportation. A lot of firsts make April 1 a significant date.

In this Administration, a Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety was established. We are organized on the basis of nine Federal Highway Administration Regions, with a Regional Federal Highway Administrator in each Region and, directly concerned with the Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, a Regional Motor

Carrier Safety Officer. The same Safety Inspectors will continue to work with you, or on you, if necessary, using the same forms for the present and the same procedures as heretofore. By order of May 11, all accident, hours of service, and other safety reports are required to be filed with the Regional Federal Highway Administration's office rather than the I. C. C. Regional office.

The Department of Transportation Act provides that it will be the duty of the Secretary of Transportation (carried out through the Federal Highway Administrator) to report to the I. C. C. on the safety compliance of every applicant for operating authority, when that compliance is not satisfactory. Reports will also be made to I. C. C. on applicants for temporary authority.

The Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety will supervise compliance by motor carriers and shippers with the explosives and other dangerous articles regulations. The development of motor carrier regulations, specifically those concerned with

containers, cargo tank specifications, packaging, marking and labeling, etc., will be done in the Department of Transportation under the authority transferred to the Federal Highway Administrator. The field supervision of motor carrier compliance with such regulations will be carried on by the Regional Safety Officers and the Safety Inspectors who report to them. The number of motor carriers within our immediate area of responsibility numbers some 133 to 150 thousand who operate commercial motor vehicles in interstate or foreign commerce. In that number are I. C. C. authorized carriers, private carriers, and so-called exempt carriers. To the FHA there are no exempt interstate motor carriers. They are all subject to the safety and hazardous materials regulations. To us, every motor carrier stands in the same light. We expect the same degree of compliance without regard to the class of operations conducted. Many States have intrastate safety responsibility the same as or similar to that in interstate commerce by FHA.

It is our hope that FHA and the States can develop programs which will combine their capability to promote accident prevention actions in the whole of the commercial motor vehicle population.

You might, logically, ask, "if the motor carrier safety job will be done about the same as heretofore, what differences can be expected under the Federal Highway Administration?" With the Federal Highway Administration in the picture, a single administrator will be prescribing motor vehicle standards which will build greater safety into every motor vehicle when it is manufactured --- and, he will have the responsibility for building safety into the nation's highways, and for developing the best possible Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. Thus, we anticipate a much greater impetus on highway safety in all areas than has been possible heretofore. Specifically, we would hope that under strengthened Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, the professional drivers of the motor carrier industry will lead the way in the saving of

lives on the nation's highways. While we all believe that the highway and vehicle standards are important, we also know that the element which could produce the greatest results in accident prevention is the man behind the wheel.

Therefore, we believe that our driver qualifications' requirement must be upgraded, strengthened, and made more positive. As the years roll by, the professional drivers become older, their reaction time slows down, they operate high-powered and larger vehicles -- on high-speed highways. Therefore, we must keep pace with the technological advances by more adequate driver qualification and control requirements.

One of the serious limitations of the past years is that the I. C. C. had no funds with which to carry on research or testing. Many problems clearly exist without a responsible measure of determination as to basic causes. As an illustration, consider the fact that 15 percent of the 1600 persons killed in truck accidents in 1965 as reported by large motor carriers of

property were drivers of the reporting carriers. More than half these fatalities occurred in accidents in which the truck of the reporting carrier was the only vehicle involved. Another 26 percent of these professional drivers were killed in accidents in which their truck was involved in collision with another truck. This means that three out of every four of the over-the-road truck drivers killed in 1965 were killed in accidents in which either their own vehicle was the only vehicle involved or their vehicle and another truck were involved. For 1966 I have no basis for a belief that the record is any different.

The question arises "Why is this so?" Conditions of this type require explanation. Not only was this true with respect to driver fatalities but it is also true with respect to drivers seriously injured. We need and must have much more meaningful explanation of causes. I expect that our new environment will provide research and testing capabilities which

will enable us to do a more effective job of determining whether the cause was or was not the highway, the vehicle, or the driver, or a combination of all three.

Some five years ago, an intriguing article by Donald Buck was published in the Commercial Car Journal. The main thrust of the article was that too many drivers commit seven deadly inferences when driving. These inferences are worth repeating.

Inference 1.

"Vehicle crashes are accidental." No - most accidents are predictable.

Inference 2.

"Experience is a good teacher." Not so, too many fail the test and are buried.

Inference 3.

"The inspected vehicle is safe." Most such inspections do not reveal hidden weaknesses.

Inference 4.

"Chance taking is necessary to meet schedules." This is a sure way to be delayed by accident.

Inference 5.

"Passing medical test assures physical fitness." Not so - it simply means that at the time of the test

the driver passed on the factors tested.

Inference 6.

"The road up ahead is apt to be clear." Too fast for conditions is a fatal inference.

Inference 7.

"I've always done it this way." If you have been doing the same thing for years, it is probably wrong. Times, conditions and technology do not remain unchanged.

Because of the significant importance of obtaining more reliable and more meaningful information as to accident causes, we are engaged in an effort to develop a totally new accident report form. We must have a form suitable for machine tabulations. Thus, we can get quickly the needed facts for a feed back to you for corrective actions. While the details are not yet firm, it is our hope to develop a report which will answer essentially the two basic questions "What happened?" and "Why?"

Within the Federal Highway Administration it will be our purpose to identify accident cause problems and to devise, as fully as an imaginative approach can do so, ways and

means of combating these accident breeding conditions. It would be most unwise for any person, either in government or in industry, to underestimate the size of this task. In order to accomplish it, we must have more reliable information. In order to achieve this purpose, we must resolutely continue to formulate and to enforce regulations to accomplish the purpose.

This, you may be assured, we will do. However, this does not in any sense minimize the importance of the motor carrier industry continuing to provide the fullest measure of energy and determination as their contribution to accident prevention. Just as you may expect us to press with determination for compliance with regulations, I am confident we can expect you to pursue the same objective with full vigor.

In order to upgrade the safety regulations and the driver qualifications, we must have a greater input into our information bank as to the causative factors of accidents. This means more -- and more thorough -- accident investigations.

We expect to determine the probable causes of accidents in order that we may search for remedial actions which will be proper as well as practical. The National Transportation Safety Board will devote its expertise toward the same goal. As you see, DOT is going "all out" in doing its accident prevention job.

In developing our driver qualifications, we will seek the best possible medical advice as to conditions which effect drivers, including but not limited to heart, diabetes, and the fatigue aspects which contribute to accidents. In developing these rules and tightening up the requirements, we understand that the rules may disqualify some people who are making their living as professional drivers. Although this is distasteful, every available step must be taken in the war on accidents.

On September 9, 1966, the President signed two measures of far-reaching importance in the highway safety field.

Both of these are administered in the Federal Highway Administration. The administration of the National Traffic Safety Act will have a discernible effect upon some aspects of the motor carrier safety work.

One provision of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 requires that in the administration of the motor carrier safety functions under provisions of the Interstate Commerce Act, no vehicle safety standard should be continued in effect which differs from a motor vehicle safety standard adopted under the 1966 Act, provided, however, that a motor carrier safety requirement calling for a greater performance by the operating carrier is permissible. As a consequence of this provision, plus the obvious desirability of avoiding a multiplicity of equipment requirements, we will maintain a close working relationship between our technicians and those in the National Traffic Safety Bureau.

While this Bureau will not be completely responsible for the development of commercial vehicle standards, as in the

past, we will continue to place emphasis upon the importance of maintenance in as full a measure as we did in the I. C. C. Regardless of how well a vehicle is designed, the safety of that vehicle will be quickly impaired unless it is accorded competent maintenance service. For this reason, we will continue the road check work followed up by direct action to assure any needed corrective actions in motor carrier practices.

Let us look at the big picture, let us develop the best possible driver qualification and control rules. Let us make professional driving the shining example - let the motoring public know, by what they see, that your vehicles are manned by professional drivers. While we will be as practical as we can in developing these regulations and administering them, nevertheless, we will be just as tough as conditions demand.

We all know that time is running out for many people who will die or be seriously injured while we debate the rules and regulations needed to improve safety on the highways and to

accomplish a meaningful accident prevention program.

I can assure you that the Federal Highway Administration will not be the least bit timid about moving forward. We hope to move in the right direction. If you will add your expertise and advice in a constructive manner to the task of doing the job, the likelihood of moving in the right direction will be greatly enhanced.

The excellence of a circle lies in its roundness and not in its bigness. In 1966, motor carriers were involved in only 16 percent of the fatal accidents. However, your possible contribution to the prevention of accidents cannot be measured in terms of percentage figures. Your contribution to this program can be measured in the broader sense by excellence of the example which is set by the commercial motor vehicle industry.

The mission of the Federal Highway Administration is to promote the movement of people and things swiftly,

comfortably, and safely. Thus, an overriding goal of this Administration is the prevention of highway accidents, the saving of lives, and reducing personal injuries.

As President Johnson said in his message of March 2, 1966, calling on the Congress to create the Department of Transportation:

"No function of the new Department -- no responsibility of its Secretary -- will be more important than safety. We must assure the safety of our citizens as they travel on land, on our skies, and over our waters."