U.S. TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY RAY LAHOOD HAS ANNOUNCED FEDERAL BAN ON TEXTING FOR COMMERCIAL TRUCK DRIVERS

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced federal guidance to expressly prohibit texting by drivers of commercial vehicles such as large trucks and buses. The prohibition is effective immediately and is the latest in a series of actions taken by the Department to combat distracted driving since the secretary convened a national summit on the issue last September.

“We want the drivers of big rigs and buses and those who share the roads with them to be safe,” said Secretary LaHood. “This is an important safety step and we will be taking more steps to eliminate the threat of distracted driving.”

The action is the result of the Department’s interpretation of standing rules. Truck and bus drivers who text while driving commercial vehicles may be subject to civil or criminal penalties of up to $2,750.

“Our regulations will help prevent unsafe activity within the cab”, said Anne Ferro, Administrator for the Federal Motor carrier Safety Administration (FMCA). “We want to make it crystal clear to operators and their employers that texting while driving is the type of unsafe activity that these regulations are intended to prohibit.”

FMCSA research shows that drivers who send and receive text messages take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds out of every 6 seconds while texting. At 55 miles per hour, this means that the driver is traveling the length of a football field, including the end zones, without looking at the road. Drivers who text while driving are more than 20 times more likely to get in an accident than non-distracted drivers. Because of the safety risks associated with the use of electronic devices while driving, FMCSA is also working on additional regulatory measures that will be announced in the coming months.

During the month of September 2009 Distracted Driving Summit, the secretary announced the Department’s plan to pursue this regulatory action, as well as rulemakings to reduce the risks posted by distracted driving. President Obama also signed an Executive Order directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles or with government-owned equipment. Federal employees were required to comply with the ban starting on December 30, 2009.

License No. 0095075
Loss Control is a responsibility of your management. Our surveys are intended only to assist you in this activity and should not be construed to be comprehensive reports disclosing every condition that may exist. Any recommendations submitted were developed as a result of conditions observed during our recent visit. They do not necessarily include every potential, code violation, or exception to good practice. We are not in a position to advise as to whether you are in compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 or any other such law, and no act or statement made by us or on our behalf should be construed as making such a representation.
The regulatory guidance on today’s announcement will be on public display in the Federal Register January 26, 2010 and will appear in print in the Federal Register on January 27, 2010.

If you are interested, you can follow the progress of the U.S. Department of Transportation in working to combat distracted driving on the web site: www.distraction.gov.

If you have any questions you may contact me at:

Edward Maghakian
Director of Safety and Loss Control
Solid Waste Insurance Managers
(A Member of The Rule Company)
23241 Summit Road
Los Gatos, California 95033
Phone 408-353-5588
Fax 408-353-1261
Email emaghakian@verizon.net