

NEWS

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Road Safe America says report of unhealthy truck drivers One more reason to have speed governors on big trucks

ATLANTA – A new study showing thousands of drivers of highway big rigs have health problems that impair driving ability is just one more reason the nation should adopt regulations requiring speed governors on big trucks to be set at 68 mph, the national non-profit Road Safe America said today.

According to Road Safe America, the regulation requiring speed limiters on big trucks to be set at 68 mph has been pending at the U.S. Department of Transportation for almost two years without action, while almost 5,000 people a year die in traffic accidents involving heavy trucks.

Tractor-trailer and bus drivers in the United States have suffered seizures, heart attacks or unconscious spells behind the wheel that led to deadly crashes on highways. Hundreds of thousands of drivers carry commercial licenses even though they also qualify for full federal disability payments, according to a new U.S. safety study obtained by the Associated Press

According to the AP, the problems threatening highway travelers persist despite years of government warnings and hundreds of deaths and injuries blamed on commercial truck and bus drivers who blacked out, collapsed or suffered major health problems behind the wheels of vehicles that can weigh 40 tons or more.

“This is further evidence of the need to have special regulations requiring activation of speed governors set at 68 mph on the largest machines operating on our national roadways,” said Stephen C. Owings, founder of Road Safe America. “Heavy trucks already come equipped with the speed limiting device, so activating them would be an easy, cost-effective step that

would immediately begin to save lives. In light of the death toll, we don't understand why this hasn't already been done."

Road Safe America was founded by Steve and Susan Owings after their son, Cullum, was killed in 2002 when his car – stopped in an interstate traffic jam – was crushed from behind by a speeding tractor trailer truck on cruise control.

Road Safe America has a petition pending before the U.S. Department of Transportation to have speed governor activation required on all Class 7 and 8 trucks (over 13 tons in weight) at 68 mph or slower. The non-profit is being supported in the initiative by all national safety advocacy organizations, the American Trucking Associations, numerous citizens, trucking companies and business executives.

Already, speed limiting governors are required to be set well below 68 mph on heavy trucks in the European Union, Japan, Australia and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, so the U.S. is behind the rest of the world.

"We hope that citizens will contact their representatives in Washington and demand that the Transportation Department take positive action on this common sense rule immediately," Owings commented.

Speed limiting devices have been standard equipment on tractor trucks in the U.S. since the early 1990s, and many companies and independent truckers use them, but there is no national requirement for all trucks to activate their speed governors.

"In addition to improving safety, we will reduce our nation's fuel consumption and the resulting green house gas emissions by enacting this regulation," Owings declared.

For more information, please visit www.roadsafeamerica.org.
