Driver Violation Notification Feasibility Study

The Problem
Several recent studies have shown that drivers with excessive violations are much more likely to be involved in crashes than are their counterparts with no or significantly fewer violations. Therefore, removing at-risk drivers from the highway as quickly as possible offers the potential for eliminating one of the major factors in commercial vehicle crashes. To do this, employers need timely notification of serious changes to a driver’s CDL record.

With few exceptions, existing regulatory requirements place the burden on employers for discovering a truck driver’s safety record. While the law does require truck drivers to notify an employer within 30 days when a driving conviction occurs, this unfortunately does not always happen. The ultimate impact is that, unbeknownst to the carrier or enforcement agencies, unsafe drivers may continue to pose a danger on the roads.

The Solution
The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration-sponsored “driver violation notification” initiative seeks to analyze the data, programs and policies associated with managing and distributing truck driver CDL conviction information, and proffer program alternatives to ensure that carriers have accurate, up-to-date information on drivers’ safety records. The DVN research is also attempting to develop a relatively automated system design for notifying carriers when an event such as a conviction or suspension hits a driver’s CDL. The concept, sometimes referred to as Employee Pull Notice (EPN) or Driver Pull Notice (DPN) program, will allow carriers to register drivers over the internet, and receive e-mail notification of CDL changes.

In order to develop a useful and comprehensive program, the research team, which included ATRI, SAIC, AAMVA and CVSA, among others, conducted multiple site visits and public/private sector focus groups in 12 states to determine how existing efforts worked, and discern the opportunities and concerns associated with expanding and managing a national program. Lastly, the effort developed a sophisticated “cost-benefit” study to determine the safety and financial impacts.

The Future of DVN
At a high level, implementation of a national DVN program will require increased communication and information standardization between states, as well as close involvement from the trucking industry. However, a well planned national program could provide safety improvements at many different levels. Trucking companies may benefit from lower insurance premiums, or a lower rate of increase based on their ability to remove or retrain unsafe drivers. One analysis indicates that the DVN cost-benefit component of this research could range from $30 million to $60 million per year in crash avoidance benefits. In addition, there is a potential for 1,700 to 1,900 fewer crashes annually, resulting in up to 25 lives saved and 600 fewer injuries.

While there are many complex issues that must be addressed relating to agency relationships, system management and costs, and data integrity, a national DVN program can be an important tool in improving safety on our nation’s transportation system.

For more information about this and other ATRI studies, visit www.atri-online.org.
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This is one in a series of research summaries detailing work on ATRI’s Research Agenda. It is designed to provide the trucking industry with practical information on the results of a specific research study.

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Email: ATRI@trucking.org