

U.S. DOT Announces Plans to Restrict Text Messaging While Driving

Representatives from the American Trucking Associations (ATA) met with senior transportation officials, elected officials, advocacy groups, law enforcement representatives and academics Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 at the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) Distracted Driving Summit.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood wrapped up the talks on how to best combat distracted driving by announcing that his Department will begin three rulemakings banning or restricting texting and cell phone use by transportation workers. The rulemaking that will affect trucking will propose to ban "text messaging altogether, and restrict the use of cell phones by truck and interstate bus operators," the DOT said in a press release.

In his remarks, Secretary LaHood also commented that the trucking-related rulemaking would consider possible restrictions on other onboard communications technologies. The Secretary also called on state and local governments to work with USDOT to reduce fatalities and crashes by making distracted driving part of their state highway plans, and by continuing to pass state and local laws against distracted driving in all types of vehicles, especially school buses.

LaHood asked states and local governments to back up public awareness campaigns with high-visibility enforcement actions. And he said the DOT is establishing an on-line clearinghouse on the risks of distracted driving, aimed especially at young people, which will give them information to help encourage good decisions.

ATA appreciated the opportunity to participate in the summit and welcomes the opportunity to work with Secretary LaHood and DOT on a comprehensive approach to reducing distractions for all drivers, including professional truck drivers.

ATA has already called for restrictions on texting and cell phone use to apply equally to all drivers.. A year ago, ATA adopted a policy calling for greater awareness and training on potential distractions of using mobile electronic technologies while operating, as well as appropriate employer-based policies. Many motor-carrier members of the ATA already have policies in place to restrict their drivers' use of these technologies while driving.

The associations acted a year ago to call attention to the safety hazard caused by electronic devices that can distract a driver, when it issued the following point on its safety agenda: "ATA supports the safe use of technologies and encourages drivers and/or motor carriers to consider a range of policies and safeguards intended to reduce, minimize and/or eliminate driver distractions that may be caused by the increased use of electronic technologies (e.g., global positioning systems, cellular phones, etc.) during the operation of all types of motor vehicles. ATA strongly encourages and recommends that manufacturers of these devices, vehicle manufacturers, policymakers, motor carriers, and organizations representing motor carriers and the motoring public promote and adopt

awareness, training, and safety policies on the use of such technologies—unless already required by current laws or regulations—during the operation of a motor vehicle on our nation's highways.”

ATA supports many actions to eliminate distracted driving and we will work to ensure that regulations restricting the use of electronic technologies in the trucking industry are done in a reasonable manner. ATA will comment further when the regulations are unveiled in their entirety.

Click [here](#) to view ATA’s progressive safety agenda.

To access the DOT’s press release about the proposed rulemakings, click [here](#).