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ELDs offer many benefits, but eliminating driver fatigue isn't one of them

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Commentary

In its simplest form, the electronic logging device (ELD) mandate is designed to replace paper logbooks to better track drivers' Record of Duty Status (RODS) and ensure compliance with

hours-of-service (HOS) requirements. In theory, these rules help improve driver safety and reduce fatigue, while also making the compliance verification process more efficient. It's a great theory, but as discussed below, fleet managers can't expect the rule to eliminate driver fatigue.

Fleets have until December 2017 to implement certified ELDs, and as early adopters can testify, there are many operational benefits of these devices. In addition to tracking HOS and vehicle location, ELDs can help increase revenue, reduce paperwork and provide fleet managers with actionable data to improve efficiency. By choosing an ELD that accommodates tracking of drivers, vehicles, assets and trailers, fleet managers can view their entire equipment ecosystem in one place and access valuable data needed to make the best business decisions.

ELDs can help improve the bottom line by pinpointing opportunities to add capacity without further investment. By visualizing potential truck routes to minimize delays, as well as asset and driver utilization rates, companies can tap available downtime to accommodate additional loads. ELDs give fleet managers end-to-end visibility. By proactively optimizing fleet operations with available data and insight offered, fleets can run more efficiently and increase profitability.

Installing these devices and going completely electronic eliminates paperwork and reduces human error. Gone are the days of having to keep track of fuel receipts, tolls, log books and other documents needed for manual reporting. ELDs drastically decrease the amount of unproductive time spent completing RODS and allow drivers to spend more time on the road, logging miles and maximizing their pay—or with their friends and family.

ELDs' automated reports provide managers with actionable data, including vehicle speed, sudden braking and location. From this, managers gain insight into driver behaviors and habits that may be serious risk factors. Drivers can then be coached to improve upon necessary skills, addressing safety issues before a costly collision occurs.

While there are many benefits to adopting ELDs, it is critically important for fleet managers to keep in mind that compliance with the mandate in no way prevents driver fatigue completely. Just because drivers take the necessary time off in between shifts, doesn't necessarily mean they are resting or getting enough quality sleep during that time. Remember, a driver can be 100% compliant with their logs, yet be sound asleep at the wheel at the same time.

Companies need to fully analyze the data provided to truly understand driver behavior and patterns. From this, they will be able to compare data such as daytime and nighttime driving and assess the performance associated with each. They will start to determine what schedules are best, and which drivers may need help or schedule adjustments to ensure better quality of sleep and ample rest time—tailored to each individual driver’s needs. Through the combination of ELDs and carefully analyzed data, companies will be better equipped to reduce driver fatigue, and keep everyone on the road safer.

Dean Croke is vice president of data products at Spireon. Spireon is a connected vehicle intelligence company, providing businesses and consumers with insights to track, manage and protect their most valuable mobile assets. You can learn more about Spireon’s products at www.spireon.com.

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