SAFETY BULLETIN

Driver Fatigue and Hours of Service

Driver fatigue can produce deadly results. Studies show that drivers who suffer from fatigue experience:

- Reduced alertness to conditions around the vehicle.
- Distractions by irrelevant stimuli which interfere with their concentration on the road.
- Lapses of attention.
- Slower reaction time to critical situations on the road
- Adverse effects on memory, reasoning, communicating, decision making
- An increased number of operating errors.

To address driver fatigue, the U.S. Department of Transportation drafted regulations (395.5) restricting a driver’s actual on the road time. The rule has three (3) components:

10 Hour Rule: A driver cannot drive more than ten (10) hours following eight (8) consecutive hours off duty (adverse conditions and emergency situations are exceptions).

15 Hour Rule: After fifteen (15) hours driving and not driving, a driver cannot continue driving until they have taken eight (8) consecutive hours off. Not driving hours include time for fueling/servicing the vehicle and meal breaks.

Drivers are the best judges of their fatigue level. We know that situations change during a trip and that drivers will want to make trips successful. If a driver believes they cannot complete any portion of a trip safely, or that they will violate the hours of service regulations, they are expected to consult with the trip coordinator and arrange for appropriate relief.

Trip Coordinators must be aware of these safety regulations when planning trips. Addressing these safety issues before a trip will assure that the drivers have adequate rest and, most importantly, will minimize potential accident producing situations. The regulations exist to prevent accidents and it is dangerous to ask the driver to violate them.