ELDs Are Here to Stay: Are You Prepared to Evolve?

By Manuela Irwin, a moving industry professional, author and writer. Posted on Interviews

After the ELD rule was adopted in 2015, there have been much arguments and rumors regarding the applicability of that law. Some have strong objections, whereas others have already installed the ELDs.

Dear movers, time is ticking away. Ready or not, the ELD mandate is knocking at your door. We are one year from phase two of the Electronic Logging Devices rule coming into effect and paper logs being forever forbidden to use.

Federal law states that Electronic Logging Devices that are properly designed, used, and maintained will enable drivers, motor carriers, and authorized safety officials to effectively and accurately track on-duty driving hours, and thus prevent inadvertent and deliberate HOS violations. By ensuring ELDs are tamper-resistant, the rule will decrease the likelihood that driving time could be concealed or other duty status information be inappropriately changed after it is entered by the driver. And all that will ensure that drivers are provided enough time to obtain restorative rest in order to operate their vehicles **safely**.

The ELD Mandate – Critical Information to Know

1. The **FMCSA is not actually certifying the ELDs before adding them to their list of "approved" devices**.
The Electronic Logging Devices and Hours of Service Supporting Documents **rule** defines the exact technical specification which manufacturers must comply with, but the Department relies on the ELD providers to interpret the law and confirm that their devices are eligible.

Here is what **Dan Veoni, Vice President of Government Affairs at AMSA** shares on that matter:

M. Irwin: So, the FMCSA has a list of "registered" ELD providers, but they are self-certified. How much of an issue could that be?

Dan Veoni: There will most certainly be some issues with certain vendors. Different technology platforms will give the users different capabilities in terms of what metrics will be monitored by the ELD, besides the required hours-of-service information. Some issues that have already been brought up include capabilities to switch operating authorities and how to transfer ELDs to a non-commercial vehicle while on duty.

M. Irwin: And, what happens if you end up working with the *wrong* ELD provider?

Dan Veoni: Users need to ensure that their ELD vendor meets all of the requirements set forth in the regulation. They should not take it for granted that their ELD provider meets all criteria to be "certified." If an ELD provider fails to meet the minimum standards, the user will be held accountable by state and federal enforcement officials. The

Vice President, Government Affairs at American Moving & Storage Association

ultimate responsibility for having an operating ELD that meets federal standards is on the carrier. If the ELD does not meet the minimum requirements set forth in regulation by the FMCSA, then the carrier could be cited for a violation and have their CSA scores impacted negatively.

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2. FMCSA estimates that **3.37 million interstate and intrastate CMV drivers will be affected** by that rule.

To reduce the burden on drivers and motor carriers, the Agency is implementing the ELD rule in three stages. Full Compliance Phase ends December 16, 2019 – drivers and carriers subject to the rule must use certified ELDs that comply with all requirements of the ELD regulations.

3. Agency estimates **per year recordkeeping cost savings from this rule of about $805 per driver**.

This comprises $558 for a reduction in time that drivers spend on completing paper RODS and $65 for submitting those RODS to their employers; $144 for carriers' accounting staff to process the RODS; and $38 for elimination of expenditures on blank paper RODS.

4. The Department of Transportation expects to **prevent more road accidents**.

A study executed by the Center for Truck and Bus Safety of Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found out that trucks equipped with electronic hours-of-service recorders had a significantly lower total crash rate (11.7 percent reduction) and a significantly lower preventable crash rate (5.1 percent reduction) than trucks not equipped with an EHSR.

5. Rule Exemptions: Two optional exceptions are added from the required use of ELDs:

(1) Drivers in a driveway-towaway operation – when the vehicle being driven is part of the shipment being delivered;

(2) ELDs are not required on CMVs older than model year 2000;

6. Using ELDs will result in **quicker roadside inspections**.

Drivers will be able to send electronic data from their log via wireless web services, email, USB, or Bluetooth when an authorized safety official or compliance investigator performs audit.

Katheryn Grigsby from Coleman American about the ELDs

Katheryn Grigsby is the Certified Director of Safety for Coleman Worldwide Moving/Covan and council member & past chair of the AMSA Safety Committee. She has been with the company for 21 years and been in the AMSA Safety Council almost that long.

I would say she is a real "Safety Goddess". It was an honor to meet her at AMSA's annual conference earlier this year. I am very glad that she accepted to do the interview and tell more about her personal experience with the ELDs.

Thank you!

Katheryn Grigsby, Certified Director of Safety for Coleman Worldwide Moving/Covan

M. Irwin: How long have you been using the e-logbooks and why did you decide to do the transition?

K. Grigsby: We started about 5 years ago with XATA and at that time we were the major guinea pig for Allied Van Lines for E-logs. XATA had a fantastic back office program and I really liked it. However, we had problems with the way the devices were installed and because of the design, they were easily foiled by the drivers. I understand that XATA was bought out by Omnitracs and I am sure that the problems that we experienced were fixed by them.

Allied Van Lines and Coleman Worldwide Moving wanted to be ahead of the mandate, so that is why we started so early. We felt that the mandate was going to be tough for our industry to absorb and so we wanted to be good at it by the time the mandate came out.

M. Irwin: What were the greatest challenges you faced up during the implementation period?

K. Grigsby: Well Allied chose the vendor so deciding on the provider was not an issue for us, nor budgeting, because Allied was passing a flat monthly fee to us, but **the training of the employees was tough**.

The implementation for Allied was very challenging due to the number of vehicles and drivers to train one-on-one around the country – 453 power units and 505 drivers.

When we implemented electronic logs on Covan, we had 372 drivers and 395 power units, and we chose Fleetmatics. Also, we didn't know what kind of problems we were going to experience with glitches or driver reluctance.

Once you address all of the crazy truck stop rumors about what exactly is going to happen with E-logs, most drivers were willing to give it a try. Drivers have really odd sense of beliefs. They will believe the wildest rumor. We had a lot of questions about ELD's being used to affect their pay; about big brother watching them; owner/operators sense of privacy and personal use miles being held against them.

We always tried to give them the righteous side that it would prove some things that they have said all along. Excessive wait times to be unloaded at an agent's, where you were at a specific time that when you were reported in a hit and run accident (vindication), and where you weren't when a similar vehicle was reported weaving in and out of traffic and speeding (again vindication).

We installed ELDs on problem drivers first and went from there. After the initial phase, a lot of drivers grew to really like it and rely on it to remove the tediousness of HOS documentation. They really fuss if there is something wrong with their tablet and we have to send them another tablet to fix it. They don't like doing paper logs anymore.

A lot of drivers said that they would quit if we put E-logs on them. However, we only lost one outright. He retired rather than face learning the Electronic Logs and he was 77 years old at the time.

M. Irwin: What are some real benefits ELDs have, other than ensuring fully compliance with the HOS rule?

K. Grigsby: There are a lot of benefits to the E-logs:

Your staff will have instant ability to see where your drivers are at all times for better **dispatching and planning of loads.**

You will have increased awareness of what is happening on the road**.** Issues such as speeding, because that is a factor in most accidents (you can preset the limits and if the driver has repeated alerts, you can give counseling and discipline, or reward those that aren't speeding) which nips in the bud citations and roadside inspections that are caused by speeding.

Hard braking is another issue ELDs can be beneficial for. If you have a driver that is tailgating and constantly hard braking – you can address it before he is in an accident. ELDs saves on maintenance from worn out brakes and reduces accidents.

The **fueling is definitely reduced** due to being able to see the speeding and hard braking habits that burn extra fuel. In addition, it tells you if your driver is leaving the truck/tractor idling 24/7 and waste fuel. Your GPS reporting can alert you if the driver is 10 feet away from the pump to ensure no one is selling fuel.

Documentation for an accident is much easier. You can absolutely prove or disprove what the driver was doing for hours before the accident.

Lastly, **Hours of Service (HOS) is of course easier** on everyone because so much of the burdensome documenting is done automatically. The GPS and E-log are plugged into the ECM of the engine, which allows all kinds of data to be visible and recorded for HOS. You no longer have to document when a state line is crossed for mileage. The ECM reports starting and stopping and all movements of the truck/tractor and does it to the second instead of the paper-logs 15 minute increments. All E-logs have a login and pre-trip, so you know who is driving the vehicle and the ability to electronically sign it at the end of the day before logging out.

The E-logs also make a very **quick DOT audits** because the data is readily available and without question, accurate to the second.

M. Irwin: What are the actual costs for the ELD per truck per year?

K. Grigsby: From other companies I have heard a wide range of prices. Some have deals that you don't pay for equipment but have a larger monthly fee. Others have purchase prices of the E-log device and the display tablet but then a small monthly fee.

We are currently using **Fleetmatics and it is $34.00 per month** for the GPS and E-logs. We have some local vehicles on GPS only for better dispatching and that cost is reduced.

I don't want to make is sound like E-logs are the cure for all the problems, but there are some unexpected windfalls too. They put a sticker on the truck/tractor that states there are E-logs on board. Most officers will pass a truck/tractor through, rather than waste time. One of the biggest hurdles with roadside inspections for moving companies is that of HOS, because they know our issues – so less inspections means less violations. Less violations means your CSA scores are going down across the board.

The Vendors – Devices and Costs

To find out more about the e-logbooks, I reached different vendors and asked about their devices and costs. Here is what some of them shared:

"There are no upfront costs for our products. Cost varies from $30 to $100 per truck depending upon many factors including number of vehicles, country of location and how many additional features the customer wants. Besides HOS logs, we have a wide range of features including: real-time traffic and navigation, advanced workflow management tools, driver communications, safety and compliance reporting, vehicle maintenance modules. Our ELDs are compliant with today's current HOS standards and will be compliant with the final 2017 standards."

Sid Nair
Senior Director, **Teletrac Navman**

"The device (Android tablet) is acquired by your company from your service provider (like Verizon or AT&T). There is a subscription fee of $30 per truck per month. We have 33 apps available and over 500 programs on the "TMS" system. It is compliant with the FMCSA standards."

Mike Lanzone
Load Logistics

"Hardware is $175 one time charge, with no installation costs. Software installs in 30 seconds. Depending on the length of the contract, service fees vary from $30 to $24 per truck per month. We offer a full fleet management solution. Those features include: IFTA, Fuel Tracking, GPS, Document Management Solution, Repair and Maintenance Suite (includes mechanic app), Accident Investigation, Closed-Loop eDVIR, Alerts and Reports. Gorilla Safety offers an FMCSA compliant ELD solution to fleets across the US. It is compatible with iOS."

Mark Walton
Co-founder, **Gorilla Safety**

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