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WASHINGTON - Truck drivers will continue to be limited to driving only 11 hours within a 14-hour duty period, after which they must go off duty for at least 10 hours under an Interim Final Rule (IFR) made public today by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The IFR was developed after new data showed that safety levels have been maintained since the 11-hour driving limit was first implemented in 2003.

"This proposal keeps in place hours-of-service limits that improve highway safety by ensuring that drivers are rested and ready to work," FMCSA Administrator John H. Hill said. "The data makes clear that these rules continue to protect drivers, make our roads safer and keep our economy moving."

The agency noted that, in 2006, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.94 - the lowest rate ever recorded. Similarly, since 2003, the percentage of large trucks involved in fatigue-related fatal crashes in the 11th hour of driving has remained below the average of the years 1991-2002. In 2005 alone, the agency noted, there was only one large truck involved in a fatigue-related fatal crash in the 11th hour of driving while in 2004 there were none.

In addition, between 2003, when the 11-hour driving limit and the 34-hour restart were adopted, and 2006, the percent of fatigue-related large truck crashes relative to all fatal large truck crashes has remained consistent. And the agency's estimates show that only seven percent of large truck crashes are fatigue related.

Hill noted that the agency also is working to finalize a proposed rule that would require drivers and trucking companies with serious or repeat hours-of-service violations to track their hours of service using electronic on-board recorders.

The agency issued the new hours of service rule in response to the recent decision by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals vacating key provisions of the existing hours of service rules effective on December 27. In order to ensure no gap in coverage of these important safety rules, today's rule temporarily reinstates those two provisions while the agency gathers public comment on its actions and the underlying safety analysis before issuing a final rule.

The IFR is available at: <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/about/news/news-releases/2007/hos.pdf>