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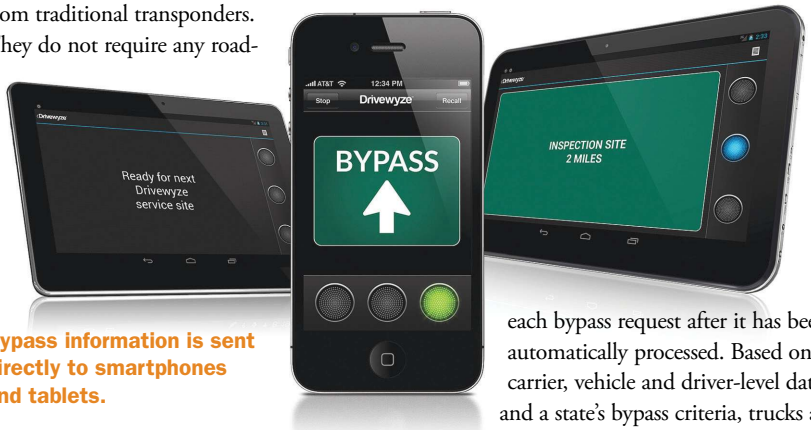
Thanks to Cell Phones, Bypassing Weigh Stations Is Now A Lot Easier

CMRS transponder technology is a game changer. **By Gregory Van Tighem**

It wasn't that long ago all phone calls were made from stationary phones in the home or office. Hard wired. Today, we take cell phones and smartphones for granted. While they help everyone from truck drivers to fleet managers stay connected, they also offer a new way of doing business.

"We call it Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) transponder technology," explains Brian Heath, president of Burlingame, Calif.-based Drivewyze. "Through our Drivewyze weigh station bypass service, it's a game changer for the trucking industry. Traditional transponder technology—expensive poles with short distance radio transmitters—began more than 20 years ago and that's akin to a hard wired telephone. It was the only way you could do bypass back then. But today, CMRS transponders are unique from traditional transponders. They do not require any roadside hardware to work and instead communicate using cellular data connectivity."

The Drivewyze bypass program is currently offered by 16 state agencies at 223 locations.



Bypass information is sent directly to smartphones and tablets.

According to Heath, Drivewyze is a transparent, neutral platform that allows state agencies to reward safe truck companies (as indicated by Compliance, Safety, Accountability—or CSA—scores), with bypass opportunities.

"This frees frontline inspection officers to focus their attention on the trucks that need inspections," says Heath. "A secure interface inside the weigh station displays the results of each bypass request after it has been automatically processed. Based on carrier, vehicle and driver-level data, and a state's bypass criteria, trucks are instructed to either bypass or report to the weigh station. Aside from a 2 percent random inspection, most fleets with high safety scores can enjoy bypass rates of up to 98 percent."

Heath adds that Drivewyze PreClear is the nation's only mobile-based commercial vehicle subscription service for weigh station and roadside inspection site bypass. The service runs on permanently installed in-truck devices as well as mounted tablets and smartphones.

"An FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) study showed that a weigh station stop, made for as little as five minutes at a time, costs the operator $8.68 in fuel and lost time," notes Heath. "The ROI for Drivewyze PreClear is one of the best in the industry."

Thanks to working with partners such as PeopleNet, XRS and Zonar, Heath says the future is exciting.

"We started by having our technology available on smartphones—downloaded from App stores. But for fleets that have onboard systems, we're integrating Drivewyze with their tablets and systems so they can literally 'turn on' and register Drivewyze for bypass opportunities."

In addition, Heath says Drivewyze provides 'proof in the pudding' about the value of bypassing.

"Each month we provide a full, easy-to-understand report that shows the ROI for our customers. One smaller fleet, running eight trucks, was shown it had 162 bypass opportunities over a month's time, and was granted 157 bypasses (a 97 percent bypass rate). Those trucks and drivers saved 13.1 hours and 62.8 gallons in fuel, which was calculated to save

their company $1,362. We even showed the benefit to the environment—bypassing reduced CO2 emissions by 1.9 tons. The cost for the service? Just $15.75 for multi-state bypass coverage with volume discounts available."

The Drivewyze bypass program is currently offered by 16 state agencies at 223 locations. Heath says new states continue to adopt the Drivewyze program and service site locations are being added each month with a goal to have full national coverage in 2014.

"With the advent of what we're doing with GPS-connected devices and the $380 billion infrastructure investment that wireless cellular carriers have made in providing data coverage, bypass services can now be deployed to all fixed and mobile enforcement sites across the country without any installation costs," he says. "This represents a significant leap in vehicle to roadside communication capabilities at significantly lower costs for both states and the fleets that utilize the bypass system." ◆

Gregory Van Tighem is a business writer living in the Seattle area.

New HOS Rules Prompt Fleets to Reevaluate EOBR Strategies

By ANGELA SHUE

Amid changing regulations, fleets today are making significant changes to how they monitor and manage driver behavior, available hours and compliance with newly instituted regulations, not to mention how to best manage their costs, assets and delivery schedules.

I am referring of course to the new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Hours of Service (HOS) rules that went into effect July 1, 2013.

Since the inception of the Hours of Service rules in 1939, incremental changes have been made to available hours but none more directly impacting daily operations as the July 1 modifications. These new requirements have really stirred the pot, and fleets are scrambling to understand what they need to do to comply and to assess the implications on their core business.

One of the biggest challenges fleets face is implementing change management in how drivers account for their time and adjust to the new reset, and in some cases sleeper berth requirements. Along with behavior and time management, companies have to evaluate the impact the rule requirements have to their existing delivery schedules; how many customers they can deliver to in a day knowing they lost 30 minutes to a required break; how far they can move freight; and backup options if a company suddenly discovers it doesn't have enough drivers that day because some are over their HOS limit.

For companies currently using EOBRs (electronic on-board recorders), the adjustment to the new regulations seems to be less challenging, and compliance is easier to ensure and measure. These companies are ahead of the curve as it relates to having insight into their fleet operations and use EOBRs to assist with change management when their business or compliance rules change. Furthermore, having a system that proactively coaches a driver on his/her performance against compliance standards in real time helps simplify the adoption and takes the guess work out of learning the new rules all at once. With less worries about compliance, companies can focus on more critical issues that drive revenue to their bottom line, like how can they optimize their drive and delivery times.

For fleets not already using EOBRs, these new HOS regulations will certainly require a longer learning curve and adjustment period for the approach they will now need to take to ensure their drivers are educated and operating within the confines of the new regulations. Change management without EOBR technology will require a more interactive approach to driver management, whereas users of EOBR technology enjoy a more proactive than reactive implementation of the change process.

A significant advantage to automating compliance is having a system that preemptively alerts potential compliance situations prior to a driver actually going into violation. An example would be not allowing a driver to log into the fleet management system when he has not had a sufficient break and therefore doesn't have enough available hours to finish or begin his assigned shift. This proactive insight prevents the driver and the fleet from incurring violations and potentially costly penalties.

In reaction to the challenges managing the new rule set brings, some fleets, especially the smaller ones, will look for a low cost solution that will help them meet the minimum standards of HOS compliance. While this may suffice for compliance, these fleets will miss out on the additional benefits they could receive, such as improved safety, fuel economy, productivity, asset management and on-time delivery. What these fleets tend to overlook is for a few more dollars a month they could own a more powerful EOBR solution allowing them to go beyond HOS compliance and tackle additional operational issues head-on.

For fleets that are evaluating their options and still struggling to make the call on the right solution to help them meet the new HOS requirements, consider this checklist:

- Who within your organization is held accountable for compliance, is it the driver or the dispatcher? Ideally, it should be a combination of both, so make sure the EOBR you select has tools for drivers as well as fleet managers to make informed decisions to ensure compliance.
- Which solutions will help you be proactive about compliance? For instance, alerting your drivers to important data such as when they are approaching their HOS limit or a 30-minute break? Have they had a sufficient break before logging back in for duty? Notifying drivers they are eligible for a 34-hour reset or not?
- How will the new HOS rules impact your current delivery schedules and driver schedules? EOBR software that ties in with your scheduling and dispatch software can be a significant benefit, ensuring you don't schedule drivers for shifts they aren't eligible for under the new HOS rules.
- How can you best communicate new policies and business requirements to your drivers, dispatchers and fleet managers? EOBRs with back office systems can be set up to notify dispatchers and managers of issues that drivers are having in performance to the new process or requirements.
- Are there opportunities within your fleet to improve and reduce your costs as you automate compliance? How do you measure your safety, fuel economy, driver behavior and customer service? Some EOBRs can provide many more benefits aside from HOS tracking.

For fleets already comfortable with EOBR technology, the new HOS regulations—and ones coming in the future—shouldn't be too much of a shock. For others, think through this checklist and use the new HOS mandate as an opportunity to take a more proactive approach to managing drivers and evaluating your overall fleet performance.

There is a reason fleets have used EOBRs prior to a mandate, and you owe it to your fleet to understand how you can avoid unnecessary fines and penalties and increase your overall operational efficiency and safety. In the long term, your cost savings will well outweigh your up-front investment. ◆

Angela Shue is Senior Vice President for Cadec Global.