



18 May 2021

No excuses for compromising safety

This Road Safety Week (17-23 May), we want to improve safety for truck drivers and all road users by supporting the introduction of electronic log books, says Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett.

“The industry must stand up for measures that maximise and improve safety for its workers and for all road users,” Leggett says. “As the peak industry body for the trucking industry, we believe the gradual introduction of electronic log books with GPS will eliminate opportunities for logbook discrepancies of drivers’ hours.

“We want all drivers to return home safely at the end of their work day.

“The technology already exists to ensure drivers don’t exceed their legal work time. Drivers working longer than they should compromise their safety, as well as the safety of other road users.”

Leggett says the RTF’s stance will likely have mixed support across the industry, but that the time is right, especially to protect the work hours currently allowed by law.

“The RTF promotes an industry that enforces high safety standards. We do not condone or defend truck operators and drivers who are deliberately, or negligently, non-compliant with transport and safety laws,” Leggett says.

“In this country, 93% of freight travels by truck. New Zealand is a long, thin country with economic activity and populations in locations distant from one another. This means that 13 hours driving per day, with appropriate rest breaks, is vital to ensure goods get to where they need to go.”

The RTF recognises that it will take years to implement full use of the appropriate tracking technology and that dispensations would have to be considered for some rarely used commercial vehicles.

“There is growing concern about the customer and supply chain pressures that drivers believe force them into not complying with work time hours,” Leggett says. “We believe these issues are linked and that is why we have raised with the Minister of Transport the need for an industry accord, to consider all major challenges in the industry and create a safer operating environment. We are awaiting his response.”

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About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Association NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 32,868 people (2.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports 93% of the total tonnes of freight moved in New Zealand.