Safety Shout-Outs for Truck Drivers in Wyoming

Since 2017, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services (DWS) has teamed up with the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and the Wyoming Trucking Association (WTA) to promote safety for truck drivers using the state-wide Dynamic Message System (DMS), a network of electronic, customizable display signs placed on interstates and secondary roads around the state. In 2020, this effort received positive national media coverage.

The Challenge

Truck-involved crashes have long been a safety concern in Wyoming. Interstate 80, one of the nation's busiest transcontinental freight routes, crosses the entire southern width of the state (403 miles), reaches its highest elevation point in Wyoming, and experiences frequent severe weather events throughout the year. Additionally, the cross-country routes served by other Wyoming highways and the concentration of heavy industry in the west make specialized and long-haul truck traffic commonplace throughout the state. During 2015-2019, Wyoming's 110 fatal truck-involved crashes resulted in 132 deaths; 31 (23%) of these deaths were among truck drivers (*WYDOT, 2019 Report on Traffic Crashes*).

The Response

In 2017, Wyoming hosted two interns from the national Occupational Health Internship Program (OHIP) who interviewed truck drivers at Ports of Entry to assess hazards they face on Wyoming roads. A leading hazard reported was "other drivers" (both truckers and general motorists), which signaled a need to increase public outreach and education about trucking-related safety concerns. In response, the OHIP interns developed a series of DMS messages, which are reviewed annually for display during September's National Truck Driver Appreciation Week (NTDAW). Two messages often used are: *Semi-Trucks Need Two Football Fields to Stop - Pass with Care*, and *Car vs. Semi? No Contest. Give Them Space*.

The Impact

During the 2020 NTDAW, a national online trucking-focused media outlet ran a story entitled, "WYDOT's Dynamic Message Signs Urge Motorists to Respect Big Rigs." Media recognition of this effort in 2020 was timely, as the concurrent COVID-19 pandemic dramatically elevated public awareness of America's truck drivers as essential workers and the keystone in our national supply chain, underscoring the critical importance of their safety at work.

> *"Truck drivers are limited on how much we can reach out and educate the motoring public. [This effort] helps keep passenger cars more aware, which allows us to travel safer."*
> **-Daisy Delaney, former trucker, as identified and quoted by *Transportation Nation Network***

For more information:

Contact - Wyoming Occupational Epidemiology Program: http://wyomingworkforce.org/data/epidemiology/
Read - Wyoming Truck Driver Survey Report:
http://wyomingworkforce.org/_docs/news/whatsnew/2018-06-27-trucker.pdf
See - Transportation Nation Network news article:
https://www.transportationnation.com/wydots-dynamic-message-signs-urge-motorists-to-respect-big-rigs/