Ensure your ELD Rollout is a Successful One

Why you should adopt ELDs — and how to do it

The ELD mandate is here. On December 10, 2015, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) released its final rule. And, that means you will be required to log hours of service on certified electronic logging devices by December 2017.

While the mandate has been in the works for years and approximately 37% of motor carriers are already using electronic logs, many still need to roll devices out to their drivers. If that’s you, you’re most likely wondering what you stand to gain from ELDs. More importantly, you’re probably looking for advice to ensure your implementation is a successful one.

What are the Primary Benefits of ELDs?

There are a number of reasons why you might choose to adopt an ELD, aside from the recently-released mandate.

Among these reasons, are:

- HOS compliance through simplified log processes and reporting accuracy
- Operational efficiency improvements
- Proactive fleet and risk management
- Administrative cost reductions

Let’s take a look.
Primary Benefits of ELDs, continued

Comply with Hours of Service Rules

Tony Forrest, senior product manager at Omnitracs, explained why the FMCSA is requiring carriers to use ELDs. The biggest motivation for the FMCSA’s ELD mandate was improving safety, of course.

Forrest says, “The FMCSA wants drivers to be able to accurately maintain their logs and understand warnings as they get to the end of their driving time. It’s a big safety concern.”

“There is also something to be said about the accuracy of an ELD versus having a driver maintain a paper log,” Forrest says. “By tapping into the engine and recording directly from the vehicle — showing when it’s moving, when it’s stopped, things like that — we definitely increase the accuracy of the logs.”

And, HOS rules are complicated — many drivers find them confusing and hard to track. Certified ELDs, however, simplify drivers’ jobs, displaying a range of information, including:

• When they must take a break
• When they must rest for a longer period
• How long they can continue driving
• And, other warnings related to HOS rules

Reduce Violations and Avoid Inspections

An ELD helps you avoid the unhappy discovery of paper log violations by an auditor or law enforcement personnel on the road. Forrest points out, “Any time you maintain a paper log, you have a chance of inaccuracies or information recorded incorrectly in the first place. An ELD reduces the chances of a carrier getting fined for non-compliance.”

An added benefit?

Drivers running on ELDs are frequently waved through weigh station inspections, as inspectors focus on drivers using error-prone paper logs. And, avoiding inspections which may discover violations helps you protect your CSA scores. Not only is that good for business, low CSA scores allow you to qualify for a weigh station bypass solution, saving you significant time and fuel costs.
Did you know an ELD can help you run more productively? Forrest shares, “An ELD will report to the back office about who has hours available to drive, depending on the breaks that they have taken. It helps fleet managers plan their loads better by knowing which drivers are available, which drivers have hours, and how many hours those drivers can drive.”

As carriers look for efficiencies, having access to drivers’ HOS data can be a great resource. Forrest says, “An ELD lets a fleet manager see HOS data in real time, which can be a very powerful tool for maintaining a business.”

For drivers, an ELD can help optimize their driving time by showing exactly how many hours they have left. Forrest points out, “An ELD solution can provide options for drivers, like how many hours they’ll gain if they take a break at a particular time, so drivers can gauge their HOS data and optimize their driving.”

“A driver wants to drive,” Forrest says, “and to make money. An ELD solution helps them do just that by implementing all these complicated rules and displaying the information as a simple plot.”

**Reduce Paper Management**

The benefits of an ELD extend even further to the back office — and the employees traditionally responsible for preserving drivers’ paper logs.

Forrest says, “A lot of carriers have departments dedicated to combing through paper logs, reviewing them, making copies, and then storing them — because you have to keep those logs for six months.” Once carriers implement an ELD solution, though, the people who are doing that work can be reassigned to other tasks that contribute to the company’s bottom line.
ELDs Benefit Owner-Operators, Too

One of the outcomes of the ELD mandate is that the FMCSA has defined a standard format for HOS logs. And, Forrest says that this standardization directly benefits the owner-operator.

“With the standard format, everybody has the same logs and the same data,” says Forrest. “If an owner-operator is going to drive under different carriers, they’ll be able to transfer their logs from one carrier to another and provide those logs easily.” The transfer mechanism is a very useful tool for the owner-operator.

Evaluating ELDs for Ease-of-Use and Other Driver Benefits

There are a number of ELD solutions on the market, and the FMCSA mandate specifies which models meet their qualifications. But beyond simply meeting FMCSA requirements, Forrest has a recommendation for motor carriers considering an ELD. “One of the things that carriers need to look at is the accuracy of the HOS rules implementation, which can be very complex and cumbersome. They should look for a company that has been in the market long enough to be able to implement all the different rules and all the different fluctuations.”

Carriers should also look for a company with a stable host system that will receive all of the data generated by the individual ELDs, so they can collect all of that information in a centralized location and have ready access to HOS reporting.

Forrest adds, “Most important, you want a company, like Omnitracs, that has an excellent support system for carriers and their drivers. For some people, it’s going to be new technology and they really need that support to organize and transition from paper logs to electronic devices.” Each carrier is unique, and faces unique challenges. And, there will be hiccups along the way. That’s why you need a company that can provide quick, ready solutions depending on your needs.
How to Plan for a Successful ELD Rollout

As you consider an ELD solution, Forrest offers some advice on successful rollouts. First and foremost, “Talk to all of your drivers from the beginning, so that they’re a part of the solution, as opposed to feeling like this thing is being mandated on them. You want them to have some ownership in the process itself.”

Then, beta test. “A while ago, one of our clients told me that they first approached some of their drivers and said, ‘We’re thinking of implementing this technology. We would like for you to try it out and give us your feedback — tell us what you think of it,’” Forest said.

“By approaching it that way, they created a group of drivers who had a good experience, because the product was very good, very solid. And, they had a group of drivers who were part of the solution, because they were also part of the decision.” When the carrier was ready to roll the solution out to the rest of the fleet, those initial drivers were able to talk to their colleagues about the technology, which provided credibility to the implementation.

He adds, “Make sure you also involve your other departments, because some of the ways you do business may change.” Analyze how implementing an ELD is going to affect some of these other functions, and follow a good methodology for upgrading — starting with a small, sample number, and then continuing to grow the ELD solution out to the rest of the fleet. A carrier will harness the full benefits of a good ELD solution that way.

Do Drivers Really Love their ELDs?

For drivers accustomed to working with paper logs, transitioning to ELDs can seem like another overwhelming, unnecessary technology at first. But Forrest notes that drivers grow to quickly rely on their new ELDs. “Drivers ultimately realize how convenient the technology is.”

Forrest continues, “I’ve talked to a number of our carriers who’ve adopted ELD solutions, and many of them note that there was some resistance to ELDs at the beginning. Then, pretty quickly the drivers realized that they didn’t have to pull those darn paper logs out and start making edits. They loved the ease of using ELDs. If their ELD unit went down for some reason and they had to temporarily switch back to paper logs, those drivers were really mad.”

Forrest has seen drivers quickly adopt the new ELDs in place of their paper logs. “There are always growing pains and questions about how to operate the ELD, but they really like the fact that they don’t have to maintain that paper log anymore. Once they get into a regular practice with the new technology, they all like the solution. We haven’t had major complaints from drivers.”

But that’s not to say that Omnitracs isn’t continually developing ELD tools.

“There are always ideas for improvement, and we hear a lot of them from our drivers who tell us, ‘It would be great if it could do this.’ There’s always good feedback coming in on how we could make the product better.”
Your Successful ELD Implementation = Big Savings

Like many other carriers we’ve spoken to, Cargo Transporters considered implementing an ELD solution down the road. Then, during an audit of their HOS logs, they realized that the need for ELDs was more immediate; the lack of control over paper logs had exposed them to a significant compliance risk. So, they decided to replace a passive solution with a more proactive approach.

The result?

After implementing the ELD solution, Cargo no longer buys paper logbooks. The company eliminated a salaried log-keeping position, canceled its log review service, and significantly reduced its scanning services. They saved well over $100,000 with Hours of Service. And that doesn’t include the non-compliance violation fines or accident-related costs they’re avoiding as a result of their proactive risk management.

In their first year of running ELDs, no drivers were placed out of service due to non-compliance, driver log violation citations were reduced by over 45%, and they achieved a 75% decrease in over-hour violations.

It’s clear that the benefits of an ELD solution are worth the investment.

Forrest concludes, “As carriers realize the benefits of running on ELDs, they’ll see it as much more than a simple compliance tool. An ELD solution will give carriers the data and insight they need to keep drivers on the road and safe behind the wheel.”
Getting More from Your Technology Investment

The Omnitracs Alliance Program facilitates integration of Omnitracs solutions with other leading companies that provide complementary technologies and services. This program taps into the power of integration in order to best meet the needs of our shared customers.

We offer Omnitracs Professional Services to all sizes of fleets to help you utilize our applications and our partners’ applications in the most efficient way. Our assessment, integration, custom development and programming, training, business intelligence, and predictive modeling services deliver practical solutions. This critical information increases your productivity and efficiency, so you can both grow and differentiate your business.

The Omnitracs Services Portal provides access to a suite of web-based fleet management applications, including satellite mapping. Data from the Services Portal can be integrated into your existing enterprise systems.

About Omnitracs, LLC

Omnitracs, LLC is a global pioneer of fleet management, routing and predictive analytics solutions for private and for-hire fleets. Omnitracs’ nearly 1,000 employees deliver software-as-a-service-based solutions to help more than 50,000 private and for-hire fleet customers manage nearly 1,500,000 mobile assets in more than 70 countries. The company pioneered the use of commercial vehicle telematics over 25 years ago and serves today as a powerhouse of innovative, intuitive technologies. Omnitracs transforms the transportation industry through technology and insight, featuring best-in-class solutions for compliance, safety and security, productivity, telematics and tracking, transportation management (TMS), planning and delivery, data and analytics, and professional services.