



Safe Routes Save Lives



Since the Spring of **1997**, the American Loggers Council has walked the halls of Congress seeking to allow the industry's trucks the ability to haul state legal weight tolerances on the Federal Interstate Highway System in order to have available a safer route to the mills where those routes are available.

In the 22 years that we have made that request, not one member of Congress has told us that it was a bad idea, with the majority stating that it just makes sense. Over the course of 22 years, there have been many individual exemptions to allow those tolerances on sections of the Interstate, but it hasn't come without us pressuring Congress to do the right thing. In Maine, [case studies](#) illustrated the safety benefits of this exemption. Here's an excerpt of a 2010 report from H.O. Bouchard, a large logging and trucking firm, which helped lead to a permanent exemption for their weight tolerances that allows 100,000 pounds on a large portion of I-95.

H.O. Bouchard - Brian Bouchard, President of this large logging firm, decided to record some quantitative data. The company loaded two trucks to 99,800 pounds and measured their performance on two routes: the conventional state-road route that connects Hampden and Houlton—a distance of about 120 miles—and the newly accessible Interstate route. The driver recorded that, over the local-road route, the truck passed 86 pedestrian crosswalks, 30 street lights, 9 school crossings, 4 hospitals, 4 railroad crossings, and 644 oncoming vehicles. The truck using the Interstate passed zero of each. The truck confined to local roads shifted gears 192 times and applied brakes 68 times. The truck using the Interstate shifted 3 times and applied brakes only once. Apart from a 10-gallon reduction in fuel and corresponding reduction in emissions, says Bouchard, "the avoidance of risk and driver fatigue is huge."

As most members of Congress have stated, "It just makes sense." Isn't it time that members introduced language that allows our trucks to travel on those routes that are safer for the general public and our drivers as well?

As we've reported in the past, our efforts have been stymied by the railroad industry and Washington DC lobbyists, who are resistant to any policy changes that might invite competition. However, the policies we are seeking would only pertain to products being hauled in short distances, in this case from the forest to the mill and typically within a 150 air mile radius. We are not seeking exemptions for long-haul, nor to promote competition to the railroads. This is about safety, not profits.

We will once again be in Washington this spring making visits to the Hill, seeking the cooperation of our legislators to introduce legislation that just makes sense and saves lives and reduces risk in the process. We ask that you please make us aware with examples as to where this just makes sense in order to reduce risk and save lives. If you have a story that helps illustrate why this solution would result in a safer transportation system, please contact me at americanlogger@aol.com.