



# Driver Shortage and an Aging Driver Force

## An Aging Driver Force

*As we look into the future, the continued challenge of a driver shortage looms as a "perfect storm". There are many variables that would have an impact on the shortage. One element of the driver shortage is an aging workforce combined with a decline in the primary demographic group that comprises the bulk of the driver pool. Do you know what the average age is of your driver force?*

As we see freight volumes increase many fleets are experiencing difficulty in attracting qualified drivers and may be unable to seat trucks or add capacity at a time when freight volumes are growing. If current demographic trends continue, that shortage of truck drivers could increase to 111,000 by the end of the year. Over the next decade, the trucking industry will need to hire a total 890,000 new drivers, or an average of 89,000 per year. Replacing retiring truck drivers will be by far the largest factor, accounting for nearly half of new driver hires (45%).



The second largest factor will be industry growth, accounting for 33% of new driver hires. As transportation managers we are seeing our driver work force continue to age. The average age of a truck driver in the United States is over 50 years. Since 2000, the number of truck drivers 55 or older has surged 19%, to about 616,000, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. Truck companies with baby boomer drivers insist their safety record is at least as good as that of younger drivers. This is absolutely a segment of our driving force that we need and depend on. As all of us age, we do not physically or mentally age at the same rate.

The FMCSA does not have a maximum age limit for drivers of commercial motor vehicles unlike that of the FAA concerning pilots. All drivers are subject to the medical qualifications of medical

certification requirements of CFR 391.

But, the question remains, how do we as transportation managers know when it is time to ask for the keys of a driver that is no longer able to operate safely?

### **Here are a few suggestions**

- Develop a proactive safety and loss control program with policies and procedure that are not bias to age.
- Require all drivers to have physical examinations completed by an FMCSA registered medical examiner who has a relationship with your company.
- Develop job descriptions and job requirements for all positions based on actual requirements of the job activity.
- Implement a defensive driver training program with updated training annually for all drivers.
- Administer structured check rides at least annually to all drivers to assess the driver's skills and abilities.
- Develop a continuing relationship with all drivers to keep an open line of communication regarding the driver's ability to complete their driving responsibilities safely.
- Be vigilant and observant of the actions of all drivers.