

The title of this article stems from my feelings at the recent Fergus Truck Show. "Conflicted" is how my mind became when I was asked my opinion on the subject of speed limiters. Frankly, I am torn between the two important issues of safety and government regulation. If I could push a button right now and restrain every commercial vehicle from exceeding 105 kilometers per hour I would do so without question. The advantages are obvious and include safer roads, less fuel consumption and an improved public image. What concerns me is when the button is attached to government regulation and the potential intervention that might come from it.

Why constrict the governing of only Class 8 vehicles? In my mind, if the rule is to be applied, it should apply to all commercial vehicles. The Ontario Trucking Association produces numbers each year that support the fact that our industry has responsibly reduced fatal collisions where Class 8 vehicles are at fault to a number far less than that of passenger vehicles. I am proud of this trend and also of the fact that we continue to improve on this number. If we are going to go down the speed limiter path I think that every vehicle except for personal plates should be limited.

Should such a law be passed, why lay the burden of compliance on truckers? Last I heard, truckers don't manufacture vehicles...manufacturers manufacture vehicles. Why not pass a law that makes it illegal to roll a truck off a North American assembly line that can exceed 105 kilometres per hour? Surely it would be

much easier to regulate a half dozen manufacturers than each and every trucker in the country. We know that people will mess with any hardware or software designed to limit speed, so any laws that are enacted should address tampering also. Tamperers would be required to be jailed and/or fined until it hurts to the point that speeding in a commercial vehicle of any size would make no sense to anyone. Remember, we're the industry that is restricted from our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it comes to the automatic \$50,000 wheel-off fine. Surely the MOT could figure out something similar for tampering with an ECM on a Class 8 vehicle. Existing electronic engines would have to produce some type of certificate of compliance from a registered speed limiter station before plates were renewed. These are just some thoughts; I haven't quite worked all of the bugs out of the system yet.

In this scenario the burden of compliance would come off the assembly line like so many other safety laws. Think about it; the producers of Class 8 vehicles are already complying with government regulations until they're blue in the face. Crash test standards, seat belt regulations and on and on... laws of safety and compliance apply to almost every component bolted on to a truck and let's not forget the new emission standards. There's a peculiar double standard when one thinks about it. While our wallets are open, perhaps the limiter



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tests could be done at the same time we're undergoing our emissions test.

Let's impose regulations requiring lower levels of sulphur emissions to be discharged from the stack of Class 8 vehicles into the atmosphere to save the planet. This makes our government socially responsible... right? So why isn't the government mandating speed limiters if the result would be a reduced dependency on a non-renewable resource? Don't the two go hand in hand?

I have never been one for conspiracy theories...in fact I don't think that the U.S. government hid away a flying saucer in Roswell, New Mexico. I think some inventive idiot was having an off day and people wanted to believe that UFOs existed and 50 years later his hoax is still talked about. That being said, when I consider who the major winners have been since the price of fuel went through the roof, one of them is obviously the government, who put billions of dollars away each year on the backs of every vehicle driven but disproportionately so from the trucking industry. It is in each and every government's best interest to collect every dollar they can from taxing fuel. Lower sulphur rates in fuel helps reduce air pollution but also lowers Miles Per Gallon rates. It's interesting to consider why the same rules haven't been applied to private passenger vehicles on emissions. Maybe because the powers that be know that such rules would guarantee they would never be re-elected; therefore it's easier to attack the commercial sector than the voters directly. What would happen if every

citizen went out tomorrow and bought a hybrid vehicle and every commercial vehicle slowed down to 105 kilometers per hour? Can you imagine the hit the government's piggybank would take? Wow! How could they possibly replace the newfound dollars they have come to love? Think of what they've collected since the price of a barrel of oil went from 40 to 80 dollars per barrel just a few years back.

So how will they replace the lost revenue that lower speeds might cost them if speed limiters actually come to be? I'm not sure but a few ideas come to mind like increased fuel taxes and enforcement dollars for the new rules and regulations that will need to be implemented. These are just guesses on my part of course. Who knows where they'll find the dollars, but find them they will...you can be assured of that.

I know that this article will raise the blood pressure of some staunch supporters and I applaud your good intention. But I am one who, in weighing the benefits versus the possible ramifications of speed limiters and government regulation, remains conflicted.

What do you think?

Please feel free to drop me a line on this idea.

Safe driving!

Ray J. Haight
CEO, The Alliance Canada
ray@otr.on.ca 🍁