



[May 2011 NTSB Forum On Safety of Big Rig Semi Trucks and Buses Starts Today: You're Invited](#)

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Beginning today and for the next two days, the [National Transportation Safety Board](#) is hosting a [national forum](#) where all sorts of trucking professionals — safety experts, trucking industry regulators from state and federal agencies, representatives from trucking companies — are all [coming together to discuss the level of safety for American roadways where big rigs and commercial buses, along with other big, heavy commercial vehicles, share the lanes with the rest of us](#). Of particular note: why recommendations that have been out there for ten or twenty years have never been implemented.

[You can watch the forum online as it happens here via live webcast at the NTSB site.](#)

This is a big deal. This week, at the NTSB Conference Center in Washington, D.C., professionals from all aspects of the trucking industry will convene to discuss a number of issues. On [the agenda are key topics](#) such as:

- **CARRIER OVERSIGHT** - To examine the determination of carrier fitness, including the new entrant screening process and other Federal, state, and industry oversight initiatives
- **TRUCK OPERATIONS** – To discuss electronic on-board recorders, hours of service, safety culture, and vehicle size and weight
- **DRIVER SAFETY** – To discuss driver crash risk factors, barriers to making safe choices, and approaches for increasing driver safety
- **DRIVER HEALTH** – To examine the state of driver health and wellness programs, and the progress toward comprehensive medical oversight for interstate commercial drivers
- **ENHANCED VEHICLE SAFETY TECHNOLOGY: CRASH AVOIDANCE** – To discuss electronic stability control, collision avoidance systems, and emerging crash prevention technologies.

At this public forum, expect the fur to fly. As expected, safety advocates will be pointing fingers at trucking companies who they will argue have been slow to implement needed safety regulations.

One critical fight will be [whether or not Congress should give individual states \(Indiana, Illinois\) the authority](#) to raise weight limits within their state lines for trucks on interstate highways to nearly 100,000 pounds as well as the authority to extend acceptable truck lengths within their jurisdictions. Safety advocates are adamant that either change means more danger on the roads and therefore, more fatal crashes. The bigger and the heavier a vehicle is, the harder it is to stop and maneuver.

Of course, proponents of Congress making this change involve various members of the trucking industry. They are arguing that these changes will save money and help the economy. It will cost them less to move cargo if they can have heavier loads on bigger trucks.