

## **Management of queuing and waiting for truck drivers by road transport customers**

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### **Abstract**

Time spent queuing and waiting for loading and unloading at customers' premises can contribute to fatigue risk for long distance truck drivers yet the nature, constraints and effects of practices used to manage queuing and waiting by customers in Australian states that have adopted national fatigue management laws are undocumented. Drivers and company representatives were interviewed to elucidate queuing and waiting management practices. The results suggest drivers can experience poor management of queuing and waiting regularly and customer companies have viewed their role as preventing breaches of the law rather than managing fatigue risk.

### **Background**

Queuing and waiting for loading/unloading have been identified in past research as being both common and contributing to long distance heavy vehicle driver work hours and self-reported fatigue (Chen et al., 2015; Williamson & Friswell, 2013).

Chain of Responsibility (CoR) provisions in Australian legislation governing long distance heavy vehicle driver fatigue have, until recently, obliged transport customers to ensure their loading/unloading processes do not cause drivers to breach regulated work hours or drive while fatigued (State of Queensland, 2012). Recent changes to the legislation now require customers to assess and manage driver fatigue risk arising from loading/unloading activities.

Anecdotal and media reports (Skinner, 2014a, 2014b) suggest transport customers have not necessarily managed their CoR obligations well for driver fatigue management. The aim of the current project was to better understand how transport customers manage queuing and waiting for loading/unloading and whether the methods are effective from the perspective of drivers.

### **Method**

In the first phase of the project, 41 long distance heavy vehicle drivers were recruited via advertising placed at retail truck stops around NSW, in industry print media and on Facebook to identify customer depots where they had experienced good and poor management of queuing and waiting. 27 of these drivers completed a more detailed survey (either online (48%) or by telephone interview (52%)) to describe a recent good and a recent poor experience. A range of open-ended and closed questions addressed the nature of drivers' experiences ("What happened?"), the timing of events (e.g., "What time did you arrive?") and the circumstances (e.g., "What facilities were provided for you to use while you waited?").

All depots identified by drivers (excluding transport companies' depots) were invited to take part in the second phase of the project. Representatives from 13 of the customer depots were interviewed about their practices and challenges when managing queuing and waiting for loading/unloading at their premises, as well as the company's understanding of their CoR obligations for drivers. The interviews gathered qualitative information.

## Results

Drivers identified problems contributing to long queuing and waiting times and limited rest opportunities, with implications for fatigue risk. These included issues with communication, staying with the truck, fairness, site rules and procedures, schedule adherence, depot hours, over-utilisation of the depot, access to facilities, dock design, management of loading staff and division of labour.

Company results showed variation in management practices (including truck processing, queue type, communications, scheduling approach, monitoring, etc) and corroborated many driver concerns. Particular management challenges were posed by infrastructure limitations, unpredictable events including breakdowns and late drivers, seasonal fluctuations, truck scheduling, and internal company processes. Financial and operational considerations shaped many of these issues. Companies typically perceived their primary CoR duty regarding driver fatigue was preventing drivers leaving the depot in breach of fatigue law rather than managing hours and rest opportunities on site.

## Conclusions

The studies suggest drivers can spend considerable time queuing and waiting at customers premises without real opportunities for rest. The results should inform fatigue risk management guidance for customers of road transport.

## References

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