The one-two combo of traffic and hours enforcement packs the greatest punch for Washington state – with a technology assist. BY TODD DILLS

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CSA’s DATA TRAIL

STANDOUT

STATES

Washington

Putting the move on moving violations, logs

Washington state logged a 2 percent increase in truck violations in 2015. Nearly all of that increase was seen in the category of moving violations, which Capt. Mike Dahl of the state patrol’s Motor Carrier Safety Division says is the result of a rededication among troopers to targeting behaviors that are more often the cause of accidents.

“It all goes hand in hand with our target of zero fatalities” by 2030, Dahl says, referencing a nationwide push for the ultimate in highway-fatality reduction. As part of that initiative, Dahl asked the state’s crash analysts: “What are the top five things causing our crashes?”

As in other states Overdrive has profiled as part of its CSAs Data Trail series, the answer included not yielding the right of way, speeding and following too closely – by all vehicles on the road. The Evergreen State has held something of a high profile for its leadership in the TACT (Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks) program by deploying enforcement personnel with truckers themselves to ticket unsafe actions by motorists around trucks.

“We do need to continue to educate, because the cars are doing a lot wrong,” Dahl says.

But in terms of the numbers in this analysis, it’s clear that a focus on truckers’ violations is on the rise. Dahl suggests that will be the case well into the future as “target zero” is emphasized.

Washington has been an established leader in truck inspections; it’s the fifth most-intense continental U.S. state in Overdrive’s CSA’s Data Trail inspection rankings. The 2 percent rise in 2015 violations represents 2,060 violations.

As for moving violations, one road rumor is undeniably false, Dahl says.

Olympia-based owner-operator Tilden Curl had heard that the state patrol was using its license-plate reading technology – installed at 10 of its 11 fixed facilities around the state (five ports of entry and six interior scales) – to enforce speed limits. If a driver makes the roughly 100 miles between the southern port of entry from Oregon on Interstate 5 to the Nisqually scale too quickly, “they can pull you in and write you a ticket for speeding just based on the time,” Curl says.

Dahl says that’s not the case. His troopers “never use the license-plate readers for speed enforcement,” he says. “I would not support doing that” since there’s a lack of direct evidence of speed at any given time. But when it comes to citing for a false log book based on the evidence of license-plate readers, it’s a different story.

Like its neighbor, Oregon, which records every truck that passes a scale in part for weight-distance tax purposes, Washington captures truck movements in a similar way with its license-plate-reading cameras. “A lot of people don’t believe they track trucks like they do,” says Curl.

As Dahl confirms, such records are
Owner-operator Tilden Curl, in his role as an Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association board member and driver advocate, has been increasingly active in the National Truck Parking Coalition. His home area of Olympia, Washington, now more or less part of the Seattle metro area, marks a northern edge of a roughly 500-square-mile densely populated area.

If you don’t include three truck stops at the north, south and eastern edges, the area contains “only about 200 to 300 truck parking spaces. ... There’s just nothing there, really,” Curl says. Yet “just shy of 15,000 commercial motor vehicles a day go through here. How are these folks supposed to park for their 30-minute break or just find a place to stop? Basically, the lack of concern about it is astonishing to me.”

Capt. Mike Dahl of the state patrol agrees and has made it part of his concern, though he admittedly has made little progress. When we talked in October, he had just met with a state senator about the parking issue. “We’re looking to get a fairly large [weigh station] just outside of Seattle metro on I-90,” he says. “Part of that is we’d like to add 20 to 25 more parking stalls exclusively for truck parking.”

Part of his conversation with the senator also emphasized expansion of existing facilities. “There should be some parking consideration, whether we can accommodate even a handful of new spaces, he says.

As for existing scales, they’re open to truckers for parking, “as long as we’re not an open scale,” Dahl says. That excludes most of the ports of entry, given their usual 24/7 operation.

Washington ranks No. 5 nationwide for a high intensity of inspections performed at roadside (48 percent of the time) and in fixed locations (52 percent) by its roughly 200 personnel dedicated to truck enforcement. That’s balanced by a strong record on clean inspections - 41 percent show no violations - that helps owner-operators’ CSA scores; the national average is 41.4 percent. A refocusing of patrolling troopers in 2015 led to a significant boost in the share of moving violations in which truckers were cited.

**PROFILE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage of all violations</th>
<th>National rank of percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lights</td>
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<td>Brakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tires</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moving violations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of service</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unless otherwise noted, all numbers based on 2015 federal data analyzed by RigDig Business Intelligence (rigdig.com/hu)

**INSPECTIONS PER LANE-MILE:** 8

**NATIONAL RANK:** 5 FOR INSPECTION INTENSITY NATIONWIDE

**41 PERCENT: SHARE OF WASHINGTON’S INSPECTIONS IN 2015 THAT WAS VIOLATION-FREE. THE STATE RANKS 20TH AMONG STATES WITH LOW CLEAN-INSPECTIONS PERCENTAGES.**

Washington has one of the highest percentages of all violations among the top 10 states with the lowest number of inspections. In 2015, it had just 6 percent of all violations.”

**PARKING NEEDS ON WASHINGTON’S RADAR**

**BAD STATES FOR TRUCK PARKING**

Washington – No. 8
Oregon – No. 20
California – No. 1

States along the I-5 corridor ranked fairly high for the biggest truck-parking issues in Overdrive’s December 2015 analysis of the problem. That ranking was based in part on data from the Jason’s Law survey and Overdrive’s own reader survey about the parking issue.

**Messages at the scales**

As for existing scales, they’re open to truckers for parking, “as long as we’re not an open scale,” Dahl says. That excludes most of the ports of entry, given their usual 24/7 operation.

Not that plate readers – or ELDs, for that matter – are foolproof by any means. A close friend of Curl’s was about to be ticketed at a scale in Washington for log falsification. He knew something was wrong, however, as his log book was well in order.

He asked them to pull up a picture of the “truck that was totally a different color” – proof that the plate was a clear misread.

Keep in mind when traveling the Pacific Northwest.