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Texas Motorists Learn Techniques to Safely Share Road with Trucks

Trucking and Moving Industry Promotes Safety Message and Legislative Agenda at State Capitol

AUSTIN– Texas Motor Transportation Association and Southwest Movers Association today hosted Trucking and Moving Day at the Texas State Capitol in an effort to promote highway safety among Texas motorists. Industry executives from across the state were in town speaking to elected officials about legislative issues and took the opportunity to discuss the association’s primary concern – safety on Texas’ roadways.

“Trucking and Moving Day gives motorists and legislators an opportunity to learn how to share the road with our captains of commerce,” said TMTA President and CEO John D. Esparza. “Texas trucks transport 3,202,973 tons per day and with more than 20 million registered cars added to the mix on our highways, we want to make sure our commercial drivers as well as Texas’ commuters arrive at their destinations safely.”

In an effort to raise awareness among Texas drivers, the association hosted safety demonstrations and exhibited the American Trucking Associations’ Share the Road truck and Dart Transport’s Safety AdVANtage Truck Driving Simulator. Participants had an opportunity to tour the tractor-trailers, speak to association members and professional drivers, and practice driving in simulated situations. With a 40 percent increase in the number of registered cars in Texas since 2000, safety information and training opportunities are pertinent to the wellbeing of all drivers.

Leading the demonstrations were commercial truck drivers Ralph Garcia (ABF Freight System), Gary Leu (Wal-Mart Transportation) and Ben Saiz (ABF Freight Systems). These professionals are members of an elite team of million-mile, accident-free truck drivers who deliver the trucking industry’s Share the Road safety message across the country. Together, they represent more than 111 years of experience behind the wheel and more than 7.2 million accident-free miles.

Share the Road is a vital part of the trucking industry’s efforts to make drivers more attentive to their surrounding on the highway. The professional drivers gave motorists and legislators instruction on safe merging and stopping distances and identifying the blind spots around trucks. In 2007, there were 3,422 traffic deaths in Texas and 35 percent of all truck-involved highway fatalities occur in a truck’s blind spots (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration). This education is designed to reduce the number of car-truck accidents by showing motorists the correct techniques on how to drive around and near commercial vehicles. Participants were able to observe driving from a commercial drivers’ perspective and notice the differences between how cars and large trucks operate on our roadways.

“In the trucking industry, the road is our place of work and we must ensure that all Texans know how to properly maneuver in that environment,” said Joyce Jordan, TMTA Chairman and Dart Transit Company’s Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, and Chief Operating Officer of the Dallas operating center. “Seventy-five percent of all truck-involved fatalities are unintentionally initiated by car drivers and we want to reduce that number through training and preparation. This information and safety advice is essential to helping cars and trucks co-exist on our highways and share the road safely.”

In addition to safety, association members also visited Texas legislators to discuss specific industry items that will be addressed during this legislative session. The Texas Margins Tax is a great concern for the association as trucking is a highly capital-intensive industry now hindered by the unintended consequences of the reformed business tax. The industry is not afforded the relief available to many business sectors.

Topics also ranged from the fuel tax increases to fuel tax rebates and clean air. These issues set the framework for TMTA and SMA’s legislative agenda for 2009. Members also spoke to legislators about the association’s new employment Web site that connects employers and job seekers. During a time when many Texans are looking for jobs, TexasTruckJobs.com is the definitive online resource for trucking and moving employment in Texas.

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Texas Motor Transportation Association is a trade organization dedicated to advocating sound public policies, providing excellence in education and training, and promoting a safe, dependable and cost-effective motor transportation system to better serve the people of Texas. One out of every 14 people working in the private sector is employed in a trucking-related job. 82 percent of communities receive goods exclusively by truck.

Southwest Movers Association represents more than 350 moving companies and vendors operating in Texas and across the nation. The association recently launched a new consumer Web site: www.mytexasmover.com.

Share the Road is a highway safety outreach program of the American Trucking Associations that educates all drivers about sharing the roads safely with large trucks. An elite team of professional truck drivers with millions of accident-free miles deliver life-saving messages to millions of motorists annually. The safety program is sponsored by Mack Trucks, Inc. and Michelin North America, Inc. www.atastr.org