

## Truck Traffic in the Gas Industry

*This column is presented weekly by the Public Education sub-committee of the Clinton County Natural Gas Task Force in an effort to provide accurate, up-to-date information on activities surrounding the Marcellus Shale formation and the natural gas exploration industry. For more information on Task Force activities, visit the Task Force page on the Clinton County government website at [www.clintoncountypa.com](http://www.clintoncountypa.com).*

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In today's environment, it's not uncommon to be stuck behind a truck going to or from a drill site in Pennsylvania; long lines, delays and road repairs seem to be a common occurrence on roadways these days. And with heavy truck traffic on the more rural roads and communities also comes the potential for an increase in traffic accidents.

Citizens and taxpayers rightly question what is being done about this situation. Is our government getting involved and what about the gas companies? Are they simply the problem, or are they also part of the solution, working with authorities in an effort to relieve transportation congestion?

After being on the inside for a year; I can report that many players in the gas industry are joining hands to alleviate congestion and reduce accidents, so citizens of Pennsylvania can see a marked improvement in the transportation side of things in our state.

From 2008 until now our roads have seen a dramatic increase in trucks every day, pounding the roads with their big rigs and loud noises. Trucking companies are here to stay as long as drilling is alive in Pennsylvania. Gas companies, government agencies, trucking companies and citizens recently have united to tackle the problem, so our roads are safe and less congested in the future.

First on the list of companies helping in the area of safety and truck traffic are the gas companies themselves. Many of the energy companies have turned to experts in logistics to help reduce traffic by changing traditional operational and distribution methods. Recently, several gas companies have installed pipelines to draw water from source points, thereby reducing truck traffic by 30%.

Not long ago energy companies transported all of their water by trucks. Now, in 2011, energy companies have invested millions of dollars building pipelines to deliver water to drill sites. The intent was two-fold: reduce traffic and cut costs of water transportation. It seems to have worked -- there are fewer trucks on the road today than there were a year ago.

Energy companies have also engaged logistics companies who provide technology and best-in-class techniques to better position traffic patterns during certain parts of the day. No longer is it just a matter of ordering trucks and getting them going, it's a matter of dispatching trucks intelligently with safety and compliance in mind.

Energy companies are using technology to view their trucks on large screens, looking for congestion and immediately solving the problem by leveraging technology and communication. With a click of a mouse, an energy company can see where their trucks are located, because now most trucking companies provide global positioning systems (GPS) with each truck. This allows for safety and on-demand monitoring of the trucks. The monitoring screens show the truck traffic and GPS position of equipment, which helps trucking company dispatchers become proactive, allowing for better planning.

This monitoring has also helped to reduce issues of truckers driving too fast. Drivers no longer speed because they know their travels are being watched by the energy companies who are in turn demanding excellence from the transportation companies when it comes to compliance.

Moving to the trucking companies' participation in assisting with traffic control and safety, most trucking companies have to comply with "CSA 2010," a federal government program that has become the watchdog of transportation companies. Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) 2010 is an initiative of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (part of the U.S. Department of Transportation), to work with state partners and industry to further reduce commercial motor vehicle crashes, fatalities, and injuries on the nation's highways.

As part of CSA, citizens and companies alike can go on line to see how safe a driver and company are in running their trucking company (visit their web site at [csa.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov)). This boils down to a safer environment for all citizens of Pennsylvania.

Trucking companies operate for a profit. Violations not only affect their bottom line but can also result in a poor rating inside CSA 2010. In return, efforts like CSA 2010 help companies within the energy industry and citizens get drivers that are professional and safe. Additionally, the effort by trucking companies to install GPS units on tractors to track their location and speed, is a proactive measure; as drivers realize they are being watched they tend to obey the speed limit and not bunch up on highways and roads.

As for the government getting their hand in things, the CSA 2010 program is a big step in the right direction. No longer can bad drivers hide or companies with bad ratings stay below the radar. Local agencies and counties are having more consultations with the trucking companies and energy companies and aggressively attacking problems such as congestion, speeding and accidents.

More and more law enforcement personnel are also cognizant about trucks in central Pennsylvania, keeping up with compliance measures to assure safe equipment on the roads.

On the citizen front, Clinton County has taken the first step in meeting with energy companies and trucking companies. The Clinton County department of emergency services has met with energy companies who have a local presence, and the trucking companies who do business with those companies. The purpose of these meetings has been to go over what actions are taking place to continually improve traffic, safety and compliance on the roads. The emergency services group has been shown the technology and personnel that has been put into place to help reduce traffic and mitigate possible accidents on the highways.

Through these improvements, the net result for Pennsylvania is that fewer trucks on the road, reduced speeding and better planning and oversight have become the norm and not the exception.