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Incentivising good behaviour best for road safety

Carrot works better than stick when it comes to applying road safety regulations, says Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett.

“We’d like to see a safety system for commercial heavy vehicle operators that incentivises companies to be their best, first and foremost,” Leggett says. “This is why we are keen to work with Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency as it develops a replacement for the Operator Rating System (ORS) it uses to regulate the heavy vehicle industry.”

RTF management and industry representatives attended a workshop with the Transport Agency in Wellington last week, as part of a review of the system.

“The big opportunity in reviewing the ORS is to examine all the data we have to ensure the emphasis is on the right place. We are big believers in evidence-based decision making.

“For example, only seven percent of accidents are as a result of faulty machinery, while 93 percent have other causes, including driver behaviour. We wouldn’t want to see an over-emphasis on compliance around machinery and gear when we know focusing more on human behaviour and driver distraction would yield us much greater improvements in reducing accidents and incidents on our roads.

“We believe the road freight companies who are committed to safety for their staff and service for their customers could use good regulatory compliance as a selling point for their business, as more customers seek assurance around the ethics of their business partners. We’d like to see recognition of good practices.

“This is about the development of a shared lens between the road freight industry and the regulator. The aim of that lens is to improve safety and ensure that regulation is fair, reasonable and effective for all parties.

“Where an operator doesn’t meet the standards, and subsequently compromises safety not only of their own staff, but of other road users, we support the regulator taking the appropriate action.

“The road freight industry is committed to all road users getting to their destination safely. We recognise our role in that and are committed to engaging in a process that we hope will lead to lower accident and death rates on our roads,” Leggett says.

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About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Associations NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 26,600 people (3.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports about 70% of New Zealand's land-based freight measured on a tonne/kilometre basis.