

The AOBRD Countdown

When the electronic logging device (ELD) Rule went into effect in December 2017, the majority of regulated fleets were required to comply. However, fleets that already had automatic onboard recording devices (AOBRDs) in their trucks before the December 2017 implementation date were exempted from installing ELDs — until December 16, 2019.

The era of Big Data has ushered trucking into the fourth industrial revolution, and early adopters are discovering transformative benefits of fleet tracking that go far beyond maintaining compliance. “These solutions don’t need to be implemented just to secure compliance,” states an article about fleet safety published by Forbes. “The same solutions that protect drivers and the public can also save carriers money and improve service.”

With less than a year to go before fleets must make the switch from AOBRDs to ELDs, time is running out to make the transition. And, while there were some setbacks in full implementation and enforcement during the initial launch of the ELD Rule, fleets using AOBRDs shouldn’t count on further significant delays. Avoid fines and remain competitive by making the transition prior to December 16.

Preparation is the Key to Success

Time is running out, and you will have to meticulously plan and execute each step of the implementation process to ensure success, including:

Researching and piloting: Not all ELDs are equal, and it’s worthwhile to make sure you’re investing in a quality solution that will function correctly and consistently, address your current and future needs, and be able to support the ELD as regulations change.

Paving the way for change: You will need time to help the company — both drivers and back-office personnel — adjust to the changes that ELDs will bring to the fleet and the way business is being conducted. Implement a strategy for communication, training, and incentives to lessen resistance and guide your business through the transition.

Establishing new policies: A sometimes overlooked aspect of implementing digital solutions is that new ways of doing business require updated policies to enforce processes and expectations related to using the system. These take time to develop, communicate and put into practice.

Training: As part of the ELD Rule, drivers and back-office personnel are required to fully know how to use the ELD solution. If they cannot, it can result in a driver and the fleet being cited, and the driver put out of service. The more time you provide employees to be trained before and after implementation, the more success you are likely to experience with your fleet management system.

Installation: You will need to allocate enough time to install devices on your fleet vehicles, which can be a bigger challenge than you think depending on how large your fleet is, where vehicles are located, how many different types of assets you have,

coordination of driving schedules (and vehicle access), and the availability of installers from the ELD provider.

Growing pains: There are bound to be some road bumps with any transition, and it takes time to work through these growing pains, which could include everything from technological issues (uptime, compatibility with other office systems, or adherence to the ELD regulations) to driver issues (not fully understanding how to use the solution).

How to Choose the Right ELD Provider

When starting your search for the right ELD provider to partner with, begin with the list of registered ELDs at the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#) (FMCSA)'S web site.

Search online reviews and talk to current clients, and ask for a live demo and/or conduct a pilot of the finalists you're considering.

There are several criteria for identifying the right ELD provider, including:

- Being a reputable business with history in the industry
- Having comprehensive solutions with scalable features
- Offering solutions that can be integrated with current systems
- Supplying thorough training
- Providing accessible, responsive customer service
- Ongoing innovation

Leveraging a comprehensive solution

Under the current ELD regulations, there is neither a requirement for nor a prohibition against using a bundled ELD-fleet management solution. However, choosing a solution that is a component of a wider, scalable system can help you address immediate problems and prepare your fleet for inevitable future technological disruption and potential regulatory changes.

The benefits to the fleet as a whole can include increases in productivity and efficiency, while also cutting costs—and most importantly remaining in compliance and on the road.

A fleet management solution can improve productivity and efficiency in a number of ways, including:

- **Electronic reporting:** less paperwork and more accurate logging
- **Automated scheduling:** assign the right jobs to the right people at the right time for a cost-effective and efficient schedule
- **Near real-time alerts:** take a proactive approach to driver behavior, hours of service limits, and vehicle diagnostics
- **Route optimization:** equip drivers to find the quickest and safest route between destinations
- **Automated preventive maintenance:** improve safety and reduce costly downtime
- **Fuel consumption:** monitor unauthorized usage and factors that could be unnecessarily impacting costs

Consequences of delay

The bottom line for regulated fleets is that they *must* comply with the ELD Rule. And while it's possible to avoid an inspection and thus a violation at first — it's a big risk. It will only be a matter of time before the fleet's non-compliance will be discovered.

The consequences of non-compliance could be severe, with violations resulting in fines for both the driver and the fleet in amounts reaching into the tens of thousands of dollars. Even worse, drivers and their vehicles could be put out of service, and the fleet subjected to an audit, which could result in more fines—and certainly will be disruptive to the entire operation. In short, there's no good reason not to comply with the ELD Rule. Compliance is the path to productivity and profitability in the new business era.

The ELD rule may seem like an unnecessary burden to some, but the silver lining is that it has escorted the trucking industry into a new era where technological maturity is essential for survival. Deloitte research indicates that “the fleet management industry will continue to evolve and become even more IT and data-driven in the future.”

If you are still using a grandfathered AOB RD, don't delay in making a change. Make a resolution to create a comprehensive strategy to transition your fleet to a bundled ELD-fleet management solution today so you can turn disruption into opportunity.