

Ed Henderson - Comments

As a Safety Director for a Trucking Company, I fully expect autonomous vehicles to become an eventual reality.

The advantages are huge to our industry. Eliminating the driver shortage alone makes it worth the effort. Each autonomous truck placed in service will replace 2 to 3 trucks due to the Hours of service rules alone. Then there is off time, vacations, sickness, family events and other reasons that drivers must take time off. There are roughly 3.5 million heavy duty trucks on the road, how much of an impact would removing half of them make? Traveling would be easier, cities would be less congested and safer. Fuel consumption would be reduced because a machine can and would be programed to achieve optimal efficiency. Traffic flow and safety would be improved as autonomous vehicles would maintained a smooth flow and spacing.

The drawbacks would be for warehouses and dock workers. They would be required to maintain a strict schedule for loading, unloading and more accurately set appointment times. They would also have to be responsible for weight compliance and trailer inspections. Loading a trailer with mechanical defects would have to cease. Eventually, pick-up and deliveries would almost have to be Drop & Hook to maintain schedules and flow. Forcing these changes would streamline logistics in ways we cannot yet imagine. At a cost of even \$1,000,000.00 per unit, these trucks would pay for themselves in a few years in payroll and fuel savings.

Autonomous vehicles are coming, and the companies that embrace the technology will reap huge rewards.