



Trucking Industry Fights Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking: Target it. Stop it. Prevent It

**Prevention: Raising Awareness and Education
Senate Majority Policy Committee**

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Chairman Laughlin and members of the committee, thank you for inviting the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association to this important discussion about human trafficking. My name is John McKown. I've been in the trucking industry for 25 years and have driven 2.5 million accident-free miles. I am currently a driver with TForce Freight. I serve as a Road Team Captain with PMTA and am proud to represent an industry critical to Pennsylvania and the U.S. supply chain.

PMTA represents over 1,200 members of the trucking industry in the Commonwealth, and the association speaks for over 68,000 trucking companies in Pennsylvania, most of which are small businesses. Pennsylvania's Road Team is a public outreach program within PMTA led by a small group of professional truck drivers. We spread the word about highway safety by meeting with organizations, schools and other public groups.

All Road Team members are advocates for an organization called Truckers Against Trafficking, or TAT. In 2009 TAT started recruiting trucking companies across the country to train truck drivers on what to watch for and, more importantly, how to report suspicious activities. TAT offers extensive training and many highly effective and valuable tools to help professional truck drivers identify victims and come to their aid.

Since TAT's inception, more than 1.5 million professional truck drivers have been trained. In Pennsylvania alone, there are over 17,000 TAT-trained drivers. This dedication by professional truck drivers to fight against human trafficking is making a powerful impact and saving lives.

Trucking professionals are uniquely equipped to provide valuable assistance to stop human trafficking. Truck drivers are on the same roads, parking at the same rest areas and fueling at the same truck stops human traffickers often use to sell their victims.

Truck drivers are also extremely observant by nature. Being aware of surroundings is part of our training and often comes instinctually, as we navigate through every imaginable road scenario while delivering goods across the country.

TAT's goal and the goal of organizations like PMTA who distribute their materials and facilitate trainings is to discover and disrupt human trafficking networks. TAT has a variety of free resources on their website and an app available to trucking companies, schools and drivers, including training videos. After reviewing the materials, truck drivers can take a short quiz, which will register them as a TAT-trained driver.



TAT creates and distributes wallet cards and window decals drivers can display and keep on hand as a reminder of what to look out for and how to report. PMTA and other partners distribute these materials at events, hosts webinars with TAT staff and help to spread the word to trucking companies and drivers. In fact, PMTA is hosting a TAT training tomorrow at the main office in Camp Hill.

In terms of what to look for... TAT trains drivers to be aware of the following red flags:

- Someone lacking knowledge of their whereabouts or isn't in control of their ID or passport;
- Someone with restricted or controlled communication, like they aren't allowed to speak for themselves;
- Communication over the radio about a "commercial company" or flashing lights signaling a "buyer" location;
- Any acknowledgment of a pimp and making a quota; or
- A van or RV that seems out of place near trucks or a vehicle dropping someone off at a truck and picking them up 15-20 minutes later.

Then, drivers are trained to handle the situation appropriately by:

- Calling 9-1-1 if they witnessed a crime take place, and given instructions on what to note and report to law enforcement;
- Calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline to determine if the suspicious activity is related to human trafficking, make a report or share something that's already been reported to law enforcement; and
- Providing support to a victim in need by telling management at the location or asking a victim if they can help.

This education is critical in stopping human trafficking, and the trucking industry has made it a top priority. TAT has found a way to present it in a concise and helpful way, so drivers know what to do when they see something suspicious.

And, more importantly, it's working. TAT-trained drivers are now calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline to report what they've seen. Polaris Project, which runs the hotline, has reported that calls from truck drivers rose significantly once Truckers Against Trafficking began. In 2021, over a thousand calls were received from Pennsylvania alone. In the last five years, over 41 percent of the cases reported by truck drivers have involved victims who are minors.

While groups like TAT and PMTA are doing meaningful work, there is much more to be done and many more drivers to be trained. Every motorist should learn how to identify the signs of human trafficking and have the tools to report something that doesn't look right. The call may save a life.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss education and prevention efforts within the trucking industry. I am happy to answer any questions you have.