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The North Dakota Motor Carriers Association has been publishing the Rolling Along magazine since 1948. Each issue provides members with information concerning their association and the issues impacting the trucking industry.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Members,

As we turn the calendar to a new year and begin to look forward to what 2024 will bring us, I am extremely grateful and honored to lead the NDMCA the next two years. I'm confident in our leadership team and excited to continue to "drive" our organization forward to deliver our Mission of "Promoting highway safety, deliver services and provide representation for our members".

If you were unable to attend the annual convention last September in Bismarck, I was delighted to be presented the gavel by former President Eric Grove from Magnum, LTL. I want to thank Eric for his leadership and the support he has provided this association and me personally the last two years. The industry has continued to face obstacles since the pandemic and Eric was able to navigate and lead our association with grace and professionalism.

It is relieving to see our economy so resilient and a supply chain continuing to recover. Over the last few years, we have experienced a pandemic, supply chain constraints that affected every industry, high inflation, unprecedented interest rate hikes and a freight economy recession. Economists believe we are heading back to a normal and sustainable 2% GDP growth. I would encourage you to read the article "The State of the Economy" on page 4 by Steve Brawner. This provides some insight on where the economy was in 2023 and what the outlook looks like going forward.

The driver and technician shortage continues to be an extremely critical issue impacting many of our members businesses. The articles in this edition of Rolling Along highlight some of the pressure on these professions. However, our industry continues to look for solutions to these issues. Including the use of autonomous trucks, which are currently operating in the southwestern United States. More information about a local study of autonomous trucks can be found on page 6. Once again, the NDMCA Foundation will be offering scholarships aimed at supporting individuals interested in pursuing careers as drivers and technicians. This opportunity aims to empower aspiring transportation professionals by providing financial assistance for education and training in these crucial fields. By investing in the development of our youth, we hope to cultivate a new generation of drivers and technicians to meet the growing demands of the industry. For more details about this scholarship opportunity and how to apply visit page 14. Together, we can

address the shortage of drivers and technicians, ensuring the continued success and innovation of our industry.

One of my goals for our board during my tenure is to facilitate membership growth. Included with this issue of Rolling Along is a fact sheet sharing the vital role our association plays in improving safety amongst its members. I challenge each member to reach out to their peers and colleagues within the trucking industry and share the included flyer with one person not currently a member and urge them to join this great organization. I am encouraged by the great leaders we have within this industry and grateful to be part of such an important community that drives our nation's economy.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Oistad



JEREMY OISTAD



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THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

By: Steve Brawner, Contributing Writer | Reprinted with permission by Matthews Publishing Group

Costello: Economy keeps ticking, hopeful for trucking normalcy



While the freight economy is in a recession, the U.S. economy is a lot like those old Timex watch commercials.

“It takes a lickin’ and keeps on tickin’,” said Bob Costello, American Trucking Associations chief economist and senior vice president. “And it just continues to grow, albeit at a slower pace, but the macroeconomy just doesn’t seem to be entering a recession yet.”

Costello made his comments during a Transport Topics Newsmakers interview with senior reporter Dan Ronan June 29. He said the macroeconomy has avoided entering a recession despite the Federal Reserve raising interest rates more aggressively than it has at any time in the past 40 years.

Looking ahead, gross domestic product growth will go from 6% in 2021 to an expected 2.2% this year, and next year Costello expects it to be slower at 1.5%. Costello anticipated brighter days ahead for trucking, with the freight economy possibly growing faster than the overall one.

“You’re going to have an economy that’s growing about one-and-a-half percent, but because we took it on the chin early, and we’ve been in a recession, we could grow a shade more than that,” he said. “Listen, I don’t want to give any viewers the idea that I think freight is going to boom. That’s not what I’m talking about. We’re just talking about getting back to something normal, 2% growth, that’ll feel a lot better for the industry.”

Last year, there was almost no fall freight season. This year will be slightly better than last year but still below normal.

“I think again, if we can get back to the seasonality that we haven’t seen in a long time, things will start to pick up a little bit for the trucking industry – not great, but a little bit,” he said in June. “And next year what I would love to see for trucking is, let’s just get back to old, boring normal, right? Two, two-and-a-half percent growth in volumes, that would be fantastic. And that’s what I’m, at this point, is what I’m kind of expecting for next year.”

For now, Costello said tonnage, loads hauled, the spot market and contract freight have all been contracting year over year. The Fed’s aggressive rate hikes have increased mortgage rates from 3% to 7%, so housing is down. People aren’t moving unless they must. Housing starts will fall about 19% from their peak in 2021 and reach their lowest point this year or early next year before they tick up a little. After spending months at home during the COVID-19 pandemic – and much of their disposable income on those homes – Americans have been making up for lost time and spending more on services, travel, and entertainment, and less on goods. While he’s bullish on manufacturing’s long-term outlook, that sector was contracting on a year-over-year basis.

In an interview Aug. 18, Costello expanded on some of those thoughts, noting that personal consumption of travel was up nearly 40% from prepandemic levels and was up 1,200% from the bottom in March and April of 2020 when the pandemic had just begun. In contrast, consumption of goods grew 12% after inflation during 2020 through midyear 2021. That number since had slowed to 1.5%.

The current slowdown in the freight economy has been reflected in load postings, particularly in the spot market. Second quarter spot load postings were down 63%, while contract load postings were off 3%. Spot market rates were not as bad as volumes. For the second quarter, they were down 21-22%. Less-than-truckload shipments and tonnage were down about 10-11%. Costello said in August that he believed the spot market was probably near the bottom. Some shippers were entering that market because the rates were cheaper.

The spot market’s challenges have been pushing some companies out of business. When the spot market was stronger two years earlier, companies bought expensive used equipment. Prices increased up to 200% for some tractors. Then the spot market fell. He questioned how companies that paid such a premium for that used equipment were making their payments, especially with driver pay going up and diesel prices high.

“You add all this up, and I think those fleets that are in the spot market and bought that really expensive used equipment, when you pile on these other expenses, I don’t know how they’re making it,” he said.

In the August interview, Costello said retail inventory levels were almost in “no-man’s land.” Not a lot of destocking was needed, but restocking wasn’t happening either. Meanwhile, inventories were rising at the merchant wholesale level.

Costello noted that some changes are structural while others are cyclical. With manufacturing, structural changes including reshoring and nearshoring of factories will have a long-term positive effect, despite the cyclical changes that are causing short-term problems.

Improvements in the driver shortage, on the other hand, are merely cyclical and short term, while the structural problems remain. The freight recession is reducing the need for drivers, but that won’t last. Meanwhile, the aging driver workforce is a problem that won’t be easily resolved. Another factor reducing the available workforce is the fact that since January 2020, the FMCSA’s Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse has removed about 120,000 drivers from the industry. This is not just an American shortage. Europe, Mexico and Canada are also having issues filling a unique profession.

Both carriers and policymakers have taken steps to address the problem. Pay is going up because of the shortage. Retention is improving, and turnover rates have come down over the years. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 included a pilot program allowing up to 3,000 drivers ages 18-20 at a time to engage in interstate driving. Costello said Europe had recently lowered its minimum age from 21 to 18 across the board to address the shortage.

“Because there’s many factors that cause the driver shortage, it means there’s going to be no one solution that fixes it, but there’s a bunch of different things we can do, and certainly doing it in a safe manner, lowering the age from 21 to 18 is going to help,” he said.

Costello also discussed recent happenings regarding ports. All ports except Houston were down on a year-over-year basis, but long term, East Coast ports in particular can look to brighter days ahead. Ronan pointed out that the Port of Savannah is spending \$2 billion to increase its twenty-foot-equivalent (TEU) capacity from 6 million to 10 million.

“I think the East Coast ports can continue to do well,” Costello said. “They gained market share during the pandemic when West Coast ports were so backed up, right? And shippers realized and logistics companies realized, hey, we can move some of this stuff right to the East Coast, and then it just goes on truck to where it needs to go generally.”

More good port news came when Pacific Maritime Association, which represents 70 ocean carriers and terminal operators operating at all 29 West Coast ports, negotiated a preliminary contract with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union covering workers at all 29 West Coast ports. Costello said the failure to negotiate that deal would have been disastrous. Nevertheless, West Coast ports lost market share to East Coast ports during the pandemic that they won’t gain back.

One bright spot in the economy is infrastructure spending, which Costello said “is some of the best spending that the government can do” because it benefits both consumers and the trucking industry. Spending through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will offset some of the weakness in housing starts.

Costello said he is cautiously optimistic about the trucking industry for the near future, even though times won’t be as good as they were in the recent past. In 2021, the economy grew almost 6%.

“Relative to where we are today, yes, I’m optimistic,” he said. “Relative to where I was in 2021, well, then you could say I’m pessimistic because it’s not going to be that good.”

NDSU RESEARCH TO FOCUS ON USE OF AUTONOMOUS TRUCKS IN RURAL AREAS

Potential implementation of autonomous trucks in North Dakota and the northern Great Plains is the focus of a new research project at North Dakota State University's Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI).

The two-year project, led by UGPTI Director Denver Tolliver, is funded by a \$750,000 grant from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and will explore various deployment options, routes, and practices and quantify the safety, regulatory, energy, environmental, and economic impacts of autonomous trucking.

"We're already seeing autonomous trucks on roads in the southwestern United States, and they could soon be implemented across the United States," Tolliver said. "To maximize the benefits and minimize any disruptive effects of autonomous trucking, it will be important for motor carriers, shippers, the traveling public, and transportation and safety enforcement agencies to be prepared for this impending change.

For much of the year, characteristics of trucking across the Upper Great Plains, and North Dakota in particular, may make the region attractive for implementing the technology, Tolliver said. Grain and sugar beet harvests result in intense truck operations during a relatively short period in the fall. Similarly, hydraulic fracturing operations used in oil and gas production require concentrated movements of inputs to well sites. These truck movements pose unique safety concerns on rural roads. Meanwhile, the reliability and efficiency of those economic sectors are critically important to the rural economy.

"We'll be looking at how implementation of various levels of autonomous truck technology may be able to address those unique challenges," Tolliver said. "Safety will be a key consideration in the research. We will not only be addressing perceived safety concerns

related to the use of autonomous trucks through education and outreach efforts, but we also will examine ways that self-driving trucks can enhance safety in rural areas."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), only 19% of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, but more than 45% of all roadway fatalities occur on rural roads. USDOT also notes that nearly half of all truck vehicle miles traveled occur on rural roads. Human factors such as boredom, distractions, poor judgment, and slow reaction times can be eliminated with autonomous trucks. Similarly, they can decrease stopping distances, avoid rear-end collisions, prevent lane and roadway departures, and eliminate high-risk behavior at rail grade crossings.

Key goals of the project are to:

- Investigate markets
- Develop information to aid in deployment
- Identify optimal routes and practices
- Examine permitting and safety enforcement considerations
- Identify barriers
- Prepare agencies and the public for autonomous trucking demonstrations
- Facilitate demonstrations

Other researchers involved in the project include Alan Dybing, a specialist in rural roads and highway and truck modeling; Brenda Lantz, director of UGPTI's Commercial Vehicle Safety Center; Kimberly Vachal, director of UGPTI's Rural Transportation Safety and Security Center; Pan Lu, an expert in data analysis and remote sensing; and Raj Bridgelall, director of UGPTI's Center for Surface Mobility Applications and Real-time Simulation Environments.

As a first step in the project, the researchers are assembling a project advisory team that will include representatives from the U.S. DOT's regional field offices, the North Dakota Highway Patrol, the North Dakota Department of Transportation, commercial motor carriers that are members of the North Dakota Motor Carriers Association, industry associations that are dependent on motor carrier transportation in rural areas, tribal officials, and technology providers that retrofit, sell, and support autonomous truck operations.

"Input from those team members will make sure we address the major issues associated with autonomous trucking in rural areas and help us identify both challenges and opportunities," Tolliver said.

STUDY GOALS:

- Investigate markets
- Develop information to aid in deployment
- Identify optimal routes and practices
- Examine permitting and safety enforcement
- Identify barriers
- Prepare agencies and the public for demonstrations
- Facilitate demonstrations





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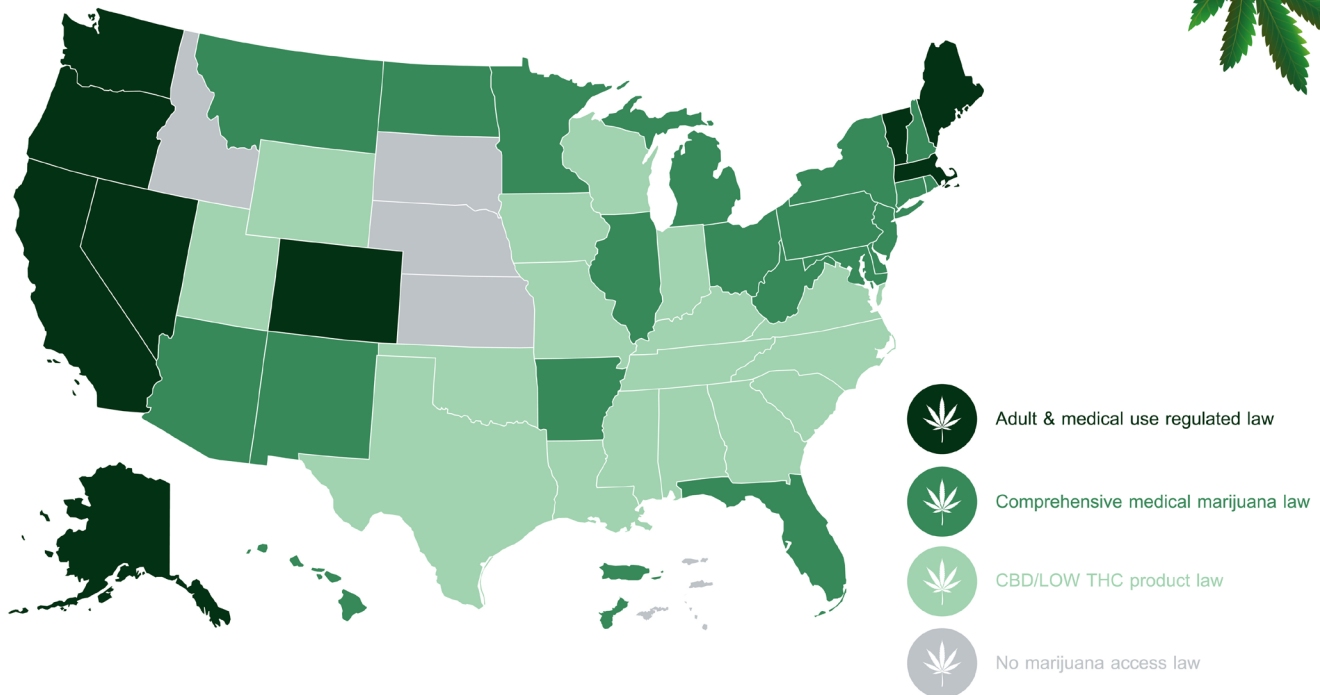
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HIGH TIMES

By: Steve Brawner, Contributing Writer | Reprinted with permission by Matthews Publishing Group

ATRI's study results depicting how trucking responds to rising marijuana use

Marijuana legalization status in the USA



The growth of legalized recreational marijuana across states is putting trucking companies in a challenging situation: What do you do when a drug is legal in some states, illegal in others, and illegal everywhere – especially for drivers – under federal law?

As noted by a recently released report, “Impacts of Marijuana Legalization on the Trucking Industry” by the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), 49.8% of Americans and 41.4% of truck drivers live in states where recreational marijuana is legal.

Recreational marijuana now is legal in 23 states along with the District of Columbia. Five states have made recreational marijuana legal since the beginning of 2022. Medical marijuana is legal in 40 states.

That’s a huge change from 2019, when only 10 states had legalized recreational marijuana, representing a quarter of the population and 18.5% of the nation’s truck drivers. One study found marijuana use frequency increased an average of approximately 20% after recreational marijuana was legalized.

The report’s primary author, Jeff Short, noted in an interview that carriers are operating under a patchwork of state and federal laws. Drivers traveling across the country would see many different legal situations as they make their run. California, for example, protects from discrimination employees who use marijuana recreationally while at home. The federal government requires trucking companies to test federally regulated safety-sensitive employees like drivers for marijuana and other drugs. But carriers employ a lot of other people, like technicians, who aren’t federally regulated but do dangerous things. California law allows employers to remove an employee from the job if they are impaired, but that can be difficult to determine and hard to prove in a court of law.

“Outside of federally regulated safety-sensitive positions, there are plenty of safety-sensitive positions,” Short said. “There are plenty of folks out there who could injure themselves or others while on the job. And it would be tough to be an employer in that kind of environment if you’re not allowed to test for marijuana.”

Currently, half of a carrier’s drivers must be tested randomly each year. Tests must be conducted before the first time a driver performs a safety-sensitive task and after an accident that causes a fatality, bodily injury or damage that disables a vehicle. Drivers who test positive for controlled substances are taken off the road and must complete the return-to-duty process before they can return to driving.

The spread of legalized marijuana across the country has created a challenge for a trucking industry that, according to the American Trucking Associations, is short 78,000 drivers. FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse data show that more than 100,000 drivers were removed from duty after testing positive for marijuana in the years 2020 through 2022. Many have not returned, or even tried to.

Those that do try may find it difficult to find a job. A survey of carriers by ATRI found that 43.7% would not hire drivers with a past positive test. Of those who were willing, 54.8% said a time period would have to pass, with 37% of them saying they would wait five years and another 12% saying they would wait between five and 10 years. Among the respondents, 86.1% said their company had not changed its practices in the last five years, despite the changes that have occurred in state laws, while 60.1% said they had seen more positive tests in the last five years.

Drug use can be tested using three methods: urine, oral and hair. The U.S. Department of Transportation in the past has recognized only urine testing for the transportation industry, but in May 2023

it published a final rule recognizing oral testing as well. The DOT reasoned that it would help the industry reduce employee cheating on urine tests and be more economical and less intrusive. It noted that the Department of Health and Human Services’ federal workplace drug testing programs had already recognized oral testing. HHS in 2019 noted that testing advances made it possible for it to be used in federal programs with the same confidence as with urine testing.

ATRI’s report noted urine testing can detect marijuana use for 30 days and cocaine and methamphetamine use for one to five days. In contrast, hair testing can detect those three drugs for up to 90 days after use. Hair testing is significantly more likely to detect those drugs along with opioids, ecstasy and PCP.

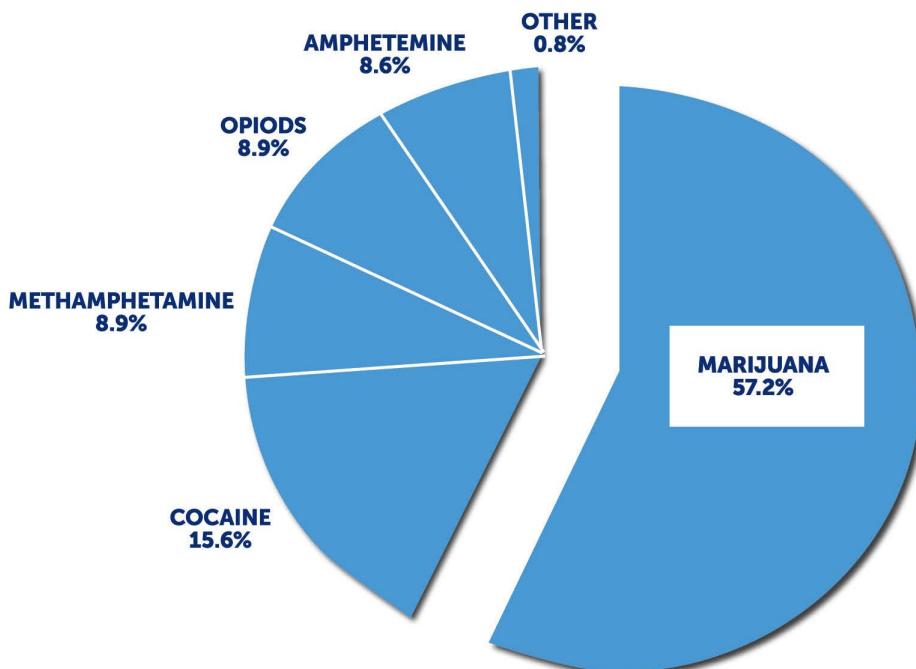
However, in a survey of carriers by ATRI, 92% said they did not use additional testing approaches beyond urine testing. In addition to not being recognized by the DOT, hair testing is also more expensive than urine testing.

One problem is, unlike as with alcohol, there is no reliable testing mechanism that measures marijuana impairment – only recent use. There are no roadside tests akin to a breathalyzer, so law enforcement officers must rely on field sobriety tests.

In another ATRI survey, drivers generally supported less strict rules. Many drivers noted the inconsistency in policies that penalize drivers for marijuana use that could have happened weeks ago but not for being hung over from drinking alcohol hours earlier.

ATRI’s survey results showed that respondents didn’t think the status quo could continue. “At the end of the day survey respondents are saying: ‘We can’t keep moving forward this way because we’re throwing drivers out of the industry who don’t necessarily pose a threat to safety’” Short said.

Percentage of Substances Identified in Positive DACH - Reported Drug Tests 2020-2022



Marijuana remains a Schedule 1 drug under the federal Controlled Substances Act, meaning that it has “no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.” Doctors can recommend or certify that a patient’s condition can be improved by using marijuana, but they cannot prescribe it. Workers in safety-sensitive federally regulated positions can’t use it and are subject to testing. The drug cannot be transported across state lines.

ATRI’s report said there’s not enough data and hasn’t been enough time yet to fully understand the effects of marijuana impairment on driving and other activities, or on the relationship between legal marijuana and highway safety. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 directs the DOT to produce a report about scientific research and barriers to research.

The report said that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, marijuana's mind-altering chemical compound, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), affects the parts of the brain controlling movements, balance, coordination, memory, and judgment and can slow reaction times. Research in 2016 found that "acute cannabis intoxication is associated with a statistically significant increase in motor vehicle crash risk." A study in 2017 found drivers under marijuana's influence multiply their risk of causing a fatal accident by 1.65 – significant, though far less so than alcohol, which increased the risk by 17.8 times. A 2021 study found legalization of recreational marijuana was associated with a 15% increased risk of fatal motor vehicle collisions and a 16% increased risk of associated deaths. A 2022 study of five states where recreational marijuana was legalized found a 5.8% increase in crash rates and a 4.1% increase in fatal crashes. Injury crashes increased more than fatal crashes. That study's authors noted that marijuana impairment tends to lead drivers to slow down and increase following distances – potentially reducing the severity of crashes though not the rate of crashes themselves.

Short noted that the degree to which marijuana impairs a person varies from person to person, and the product is not as regulated as alcohol, so it can be unclear how much THC they are consuming. He noted that the lack of a generally accepted test makes it difficult to know how many people are actually driving under the influence. Because there's no equivalent to the breathalyzer used to test for alcohol consumption, marijuana is often overlooked as a cause of an accident.

"We need to go from there to a point where we're saying, is this person a danger to safety?" he said. "How do we measure that, and then start the process of potentially removing them from the industry based on what the findings of that theoretical test are?"

The report noted the possibility that laws will shift, and that marijuana will no longer be a Schedule 1 drug. That would remove some of the driver shortage challenges and reduce the inefficiencies of the current system that removes drivers from the industry who may not be unsafe. At the same time, it could make it harder for carriers to maintain their safety-focused cultures.

For now, the ATRI report recommends three federal actions. One would be developing a nationally recognized impairment test and standards that include a threshold where a driver is considered impaired. Without those two changes, the Schedule 1 designation should not be changed, the report argues. Furthermore, carriers should be allowed to continue to screen for marijuana, especially if marijuana is no longer a Schedule 1 drug. With drivers on the road for weeks at a time, carriers must be able to have zero-tolerance policies and be able to screen employees for marijuana use. Finally, the federal government must engage in more research and data collection to develop more knowledge of how marijuana affects highway safety. Post-crash marijuana impairment testing is needed.

"What you have now is, if you're going to test somebody, you're not going to find out if they're doing something that's dangerous," Short said. "You're only going to find out that they've used marijuana, which is now legal for half of the people in the United States regardless of medical condition. They can use it like they can go buy a can of beer."

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*full list of eligibility requirements can be found online.

APPLICATION PROCESS

For more information and to download the application visit

<https://www.ndmca.org/foundation/>

Deadline to apply is April 1, 2024.

Winners will be announced in May 2024.



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2024 UPCOMING EVENTS AND DEADLINES

March 26

Annual Vehicle Inspection Training

June 4

DOT Compliance

April 1

NDMCA Foundation Application Deadline

June 22

Truck Driving Championship & Safety Expo

April 9

Hazmat Training

Sept. 4

NDMCA Foundation Golf Tournament

June 1

NDMCA Safety Award Application Deadline

Sept. 4-5

NDMCA Annual Convention



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TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS FOR OVERSIZE AND OVERWEIGHT PERMITTED MOVEMENTS IN 2024

North Dakota Highway Patrol/Motor Carrier Operations
Oversize/Overweight Permit Office (11-2023)

1. Permitted movements not exceeding 16 feet in width may travel on any day, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.
2. Permitted movements that are over-height and/or over-length only, may travel on any day, ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset.
3. Permitted movements that are twelve feet in width or less, one hundred twenty feet long or less, or overweight only may travel on any day or night with proper lighting.

Holidays	Permit Office closed	Load Movement
New Year's Day	January 1, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 30 until sunrise on January 2.
Martin Luther King Day	January 15, 2024	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Presidents' Day	February 19, 2024	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Good Friday	March 29, 2024	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Memorial Day	May 27, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on May 25 until sunrise on May 28.
Independence Day	July 4, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on July 3 until sunrise on July 5.
Labor Day	September 2, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on August 31 until sunrise on September 3.
Veterans Day	November 11, 2024	Permitted vehicles and load movements are allowed to travel as stipulated.
Thanksgiving Day	November 28, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on November 27 until sunrise on November 29.
Christmas Day	December 25, 2024	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 24 until ½ hour prior to sunrise on December 26.
New Year's Day	January 1, 2025	Permitted movements <u>exceeding</u> 16 feet in width, <u>may not</u> travel from noon on December 31 until ½ hour prior to sunrise on January 2.

4. North Dakota has a travel information map that provides width, length and height restrictions on state highways due to construction, road conditions, load restriction information, as well as weight limits placed on the state highways in the spring of the year. If you have any questions, please contact the Permit Office at 701-328-2621 or visit the NDDOT travel information map at <https://travel.dot.nd.gov/>

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