



ALLIANCE FOR DRIVER SAFETY & SECURITY, LLC

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NEWS RELEASE

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Drug Users Evade Federal Trucking Agency

- Thousands of licensed commercial truck drivers are deceiving the US government about their illegal drug use.
- These drivers get away with using cocaine, cannabis, opioids, heroin and drive 80,000-pound tractor trailers; a deadly mix that risks the safety of millions of motorists.
- And they are invisible to the US Dept. of Transportation (USDOT).

Those are key findings in a new survey of 172,632 truck driver drug test results at seven US trucking companies.

11x More Drug Users

USDOT has zero-tolerance for illegal drug use. This policy applies to commercial airline pilots, interstate truck drivers, Amtrak engineers and other regulated transportation jobs that are “safety sensitive occupations.” But a new Trucking Alliance survey suggests that truck drivers are using illegal drugs in dramatically higher numbers than USDOT reports.

In 2021, **88,021 licensed truck drivers** applied for jobs at seven Trucking Alliance member trucking companies. The drivers were asked to take two pre-employment drug tests – the USDOT required urinalysis and a hair drug test requested by the companies.

The USDOT Urinalysis: Four hundred three (**403**) drivers had illegal drugs in their system, and they were disqualified for employment. Companies submitted their names to the USDOT’s Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. They must now complete a rehabilitation program before returning to work.

Hair Drug Test: Four thousand three hundred sixty-two (**4,362**) truck drivers were detected for a regular pattern of illegal drug use, especially for hard drugs like cocaine and heroin. The companies disqualified them, but USDOT’s Clearinghouse doesn’t accept hair test results. Those drivers went undiscovered, likely found truck driving jobs elsewhere and resumed their illegal drug habit.

“Hair tests uncover 11 times more drug users than a urinalysis but the marked difference in positive cocaine, amphetamine/methamphetamine, and opioid tests is most troubling,” observes **Dr. Doug**

Voss at the University of Central Arkansas, who conducted the survey. “These results underscore the inability of urinalysis alone to remove hard drug users from the truck driver population.”

USDOT Has a Public Safety Problem

For these reasons, the Trucking Alliance has formally requested USDOT’s trucking agency – the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration – to include positive hair tests on the agency’s list of “actual knowledge” of a truck driver’s drug use. If granted, these positive hair test results will be submitted to the Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse and the names of those drivers will be known by other employers.

The Trucking Alliance application explains that hair testing is scientific, reliable, and accurate; that 13 states recognize hair testing in statute for legal purposes, and that if granted, the companies will continue to require both the DOT urinalysis and an accredited hair test. Additionally, Congress has twice directed the Secretary of Transportation to allow hair testing of commercial truck drivers.

USDOT initially cast doubt that it would approve the application, but the agency “may now take a closer look,” observes Lane Kidd, managing director for the Trucking Alliance. “The significance of this survey is too big for the Secretary of Transportation to ignore. Most truck drivers don’t use drugs, but thousands of illegal drug users are gaming the system and driving large commercial trucks in violation of federal law.”

Naysayers

A handful of trucking organizations are against the idea. “It’s disappointing to see industry groups use outdated reasons to question hair testing, especially when they would only protect drug offenders,” said Kidd. “On this issue, those groups are long on opinion but short on fact.”

False Positives – “For example, opponents will allege that hair tests often yield false positive results,” said Kidd. “But since 2017, Trucking Alliance carriers have disqualified 21,989 licensed truck drivers who failed a hair test. Yet none of those 21,989 drivers filed legal action to claim the hair test got it wrong, so false positives would seem to occur almost never.”

Discrimination – “Other naysayers say that hair tests discriminate against minorities,” Kidd said. “If that’s true, how is it that Trucking Alliance companies have a driver workforce that is 49% Minority¹, while the industry’s truck driver population identifies itself as 74% White²?”

2021 Drug Test Survey Results

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The Alliance for Driver Safety & Security (“The Trucking Alliance”) is a coalition of like-minded, safety-conscious transportation companies united in their mission to advance safety reforms and technologies that can reduce and ultimately eliminate all large truck crash fatalities.

¹ As of April 2022, Trucking Alliance carriers reported the following driver demographics: 90% Male, 10% Female: 51% White, 32% Black, 13% Latinx, 4% Other

² US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022)