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Is your RFP built to source the right ELD solution?

LET'S GET CONTEXTUAL

In 2012, the United States Congress enacted the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" (MAP-21) bill. That legislation included a provision requiring the FMCSA to develop a rule mandating the use of electronic logging devices (ELDs). An ELD is used to electronically record a driver's Record of Duty Status (RODS) and to replace the paper logbook some drivers currently use to record their compliance with Hours of Service (HOS) requirements.

By December 2017, all CDL drivers required to keep a Record of Duty Status (RODS) must use an ELD to document their compliance with HOS rules. The new ELD rule adds certain technical and performance specifications that define exactly what the device must feature.

BUYER BEWARE

Manufacturers are required to test and certify to FMCSA (Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration) that their devices meet the new standards. FMCSA has created a public registry of devices that have been self-certified by their manufacturer to be compliant with the FMCSA rule. See the registry of self-certified ELDs at: https://3pdp.fmcsa.dot.gov/ELD/ELDList.aspx

An electronic logging device (ELD) is not the same as an automatic onboard recording device (AOBRD). The technical specifications are different. Manufacturers will need to notify owners of existing AOBRDs if their devices are capable of being updated to meet ELD requirements through software updates. These updated devices must also be certified and registered by the manufacturers on the FMCSA ELD registration page.

Buyers need to be aware of the fact that inclusion of an ELD on the FMCSA registry of self-certified product offerings does not necessarily mean the listed device is compliant with the FMCSA mandate. If FMCSA finds that an ELD listed on its website does not comply with the technical specifications, FMCSA may initiate removal of an ELD model or version from its list by providing written notice to the ELD provider stating both the reasons that FMCSA proposes to remove the model or version from the FMCSA list and any corrective action that the provider must take for the ELD model or version to remain on the list. If an ELD is removed from the list, FMCSA will alert the industry through announcements on its website and other communications. The onus is on the motor carrier to do their homework before making a purchasing decision.

Your ELD provider may test on their own and claim their ELD is compliant, but the bottom line is that it will ultimately be you that runs the risk of non-compliance if the ELD solution malfunctions or is removed from the registry. As a potentially high stakes consequence, this could mean you need to take your vehicles off the road until you find another option to stay compliant.

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING FOR? WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK A VENDOR?

Is the provider of a prospective solution for your ELD offering something that is accurate and reliable? You need to be able to trust, come audit time, that you've captured everything required to comply with the ELD mandate, and that you've not been left high and dry by your technology. An unreliable device or system will waste your time and put you at risk during an audit. Closely related to accuracy is up-time. In other words, how many minutes each month can you expect the service to be working – or not working?

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So check that the operator is transparent about uptime and accuracy. An ELD provider that's open about those things is making a statement about its confidence in its product. You are well advised to check into other aspects of vendor reliability.

- What steps has the vendor taken to ensure its ELD is compliant with the FMCSA rule?
- Does the vendor have a substantial number of active subscribers to their system?
- Can the vendor offer testimonials from top customers?
- Does the vendor have a history of success?
- Can the vendor document financial stability?
- Can the vendor assure you it will be around in the future?
- Will the vendor continue to provide positive service after the sale?

SPEAKING OF PRODUCT VIABILITY AND THE CAPACITY TO EVOLVE

The technology you install in a truck should last at least as long as the vehicle itself. The tech world moves incredibly quickly, so ask if the company you're considering uses the latest technology. Legacy systems that haven't kept up with tech trends can slow them – and you – down.

Find out how often a company releases software updates. Companies that update regularly – perhaps as often as every month – show that their technology platform is built for future needs, and that they respond to customer pain points. And do they provide over-the-air software upgrades free as part of the service, or are they an additional cost?

It's worth finding out how much a company spends on research and development, too. The only technology companies that thrive are those that constantly innovate, so any company worth its salt will be happy to share what it spends on R&D. If the company is publicly listed, that information will be freely available any way. What else should you know about any particular ELD before you buy?

- Does the preferred ELD solution include driver communication capability?
- Is there provision for potential integration with your back office systems?
- Does it come with documentation including cab-cards and manuals?
- Does the vendor technology platform offer driver performance metrics that reduce fuel usage and enhance the company safety profile by improving driver behaviors and reducing truck at fault accidents?
- Does the product provide no cost GPS location tracking?
- Does the product include IFTA and/or weight mile tax automated tax data collection and reporting?
- Does the product track maintenance work performed and forecast upcoming maintenance service requirements?
- Does the product accurately account for tax exempt miles?

CUSTOMER SERVICE = PROVEN

First and foremost, is the system you're using secure? No system is 100 percent hack-proof, but you should expect bank-grade levels of security. A good tech company will ask independent security specialists – often former hackers – to evaluate its system (i.e., try to break in) at least once a year. There are US and international standards for technology security, so ask your prospective provider whether their product conforms to standards such as FIPS 140-2 and Common Criteria.

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Be sure to find out whether your tech supplier has a helpdesk and what hours it's staffed – it's good to know that someone will pick up the phone if needed. To be sure, you could ask what their phone answering statistics are. There are other aspects of customer care and concern you should evaluate.

- Does the vendor provide options for hardware installation?
- Does the vendor offer customer service support hours that meet your hours of business?
- Does the vendor offer a no questions asked product warranty?
- Does the vendor offer product and/or driver training?

DON'T DRAG YOUR FEET BUT DON'T PANIC EITHER

Unlike other purchases you've probably made in the past, this one does have an actual time limit. You've got until December 18, 2017 to be in compliance, which means a product has been selected, purchased, installed and your drivers have been trained. So it's important not to drag your feet, but equally critical not to panic either. And most definitely don't overcomplicate it! Your goal should be to not only become compliant but to also find a product that can continue to offer you value as you and your drivers become more comfortable with the host of emotions and benefits around it. Look at it like your first computer purchase – at first it was just to replace the typewriter. Then it became a place to store files. Next you were sending mail, downloading music, paying bills and the list goes on. So when it comes to your ELD purchase take a considered but efficient approach, don't procrastinate, panic or overcomplicate and you and your team – as well as your customers – will be just fine!

EROAD: A PARTNER FOUND

EROAD will join forces with your organization to achieve the outcomes you are seeking in your fleet with products that deliver all of the following on a single technology platform:

- We have a dedicated team that has been following the ELD rule-making process and is aware of any additional or updated ELD standards and requirements released by FMCSA. We are confident that our broad and advanced technology platform will meet the stringent performance and design specifications outlined. Our solution architecture will ensure a better, intuitive ELD solution that is accurate, reliable, secure and meets not only FMCSA requirements, but all your operational needs.

- EROAD's Leaderboard provides you with an inside view of your fleet based on key driver metrics, enabling you to set up effective driver training and reward programs.

- The EROAD electronic IFTA service complements our electronic Weight-Mile Tax (WMT) service launched in Oregon, and allows EROAD to serve the entire North American interstate trucking market. IFTA reporting requires accurate and auditable travel location and distance recording and a record of the location where fuel has been purchased. EROAD is up to that task.

- EROAD believes that an ounce of prevention equals a pound of cure. Fixing a problem before it becomes a breakdown is much less expensive than paying for emergency roadside repairs and late deliveries. Breakdowns hurt your bottom line and your reputation. Proactively manage post-trip inspections with EROAD's Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIR) as your first line of defense. Your drivers are able to electronically complete and submit vehicle inspections, eliminating the administrative costs of managing paper-based inspections.

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- EROAD's web application, Depot, allows you to view and monitor your vehicles' location in real time from any web-enabled device. Depot is home to a range of powerful tools and insightful reports, all designed to help you better manage and control your operation. It helps towards reducing the total cost of operating your fleet by tracking and scheduling required vehicle maintenance services, reducing fuel costs and monitoring driver performance.

- EROAD uses one advanced technology platform to deliver electronic tax, compliance and commercial services. This arrangement delivers an outstanding ROI for clients, who benefit from a wide range of services and from the confidence that their technology provider is able to meet all their business requirements, both now and in the future. The EROAD system consists of a secure electronic distance recorder, combined with a bank-grade payment gateway and services portal.

- We back up our services with comprehensive customer care. This includes a user-friendly help website with searchable topics, FAQs and online training videos. Our customers receive all product and service updates automatically, with no action required.

EROAD will support your goal of achieving fleet safety and efficiency through utilizing world-class state of the art technology, dedicating ourselves to ongoing development of future product enhancements and providing you with access to our expert team of professional staff

This is the third in the series of EROAD Red Papers. Read our other Red Papers here:
Leverage a broader solution platform for ELD compliance
Going the extra mile to certify compliance

ABOUT EROAD, INC.
EROAD, Inc. is a leading transportation technology and services company, headquartered in Tualatin, Oregon. EROAD's in-vehicle technology and global electronic platform enables carriers to efficiently utilize their capital and reduce the costs associated with fleet operations and management. EROAD offers a complete suite of user-friendly compliance and telematics solutions, including automated IFTA, electronic weight-mile tax, ELD-ready electronic logbook, support for driver safety, vehicle maintenance, fuel and fleet utilization reporting. EROAD's independently proven, secure platform guarantees accurate data that you can rely on to provide insight and competitive advantage.