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Now that ELDs have been in wide use for more than a year, feedback from drivers and fleet operators have surfaced a variety of problems—some based on technology, some based on specific approaches by suppliers, and some directly related to the quality of service suppliers are providing.

From [dropped Bluetooth connections](#) to frustrating failure during roadside inspections to poor technical support, we've summarized the 5 common ELD problems, what causes them, and what to do to avoid them.



1 Bluetooth connectivity problems



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SOLUTION

For drivers using their phone or tablet loaded with an ELD application, consumer grade Bluetooth connections have proven to be far less reliable than anticipated for several reasons.

- The Bluetooth connection gets dropped when the device is taken too far from the vehicle which forces you to re-pair it.
- Consumer-grade Bluetooth is constantly trying to connect to other gadgets, which makes the connection to the ECM hardware much less reliable and time consuming to re-pair throughout the day.
- Drivers using the phone or tablet for apps other than ELD or other tech hardware running in the cab can also cause Bluetooth to drop.

- Driver frustrations from delays throughout the day to stop and re-pair devices
- Incorrectly assigned drivers (and incorrect logs) if Bluetooth connects to a nearby vehicle
- Unassigned driving events that need to be reconciled
- Potentially being placed out of service for 10 hours due to driver logs not being current or for not being able to show logs during roadside inspections

Ideally, use a dedicated hard-wired ELD device that optimizes the connection between the vehicle and the ELD.

If using a consumer-grade phone or tablet, have a dedicated device for each vehicle and lock down the device to prevent loading of applications that may conflict with the ELD app.

Avoid having drivers use their own phones for ELD to avoid personal usage while behind the wheel for safety reasons and to avoid conflicts with other Bluetooth devices.

2 Issues with dropped wireless coverage



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Most phone and tablet-based ELDs rely on a single carrier network for communication. We see it all the time where team members carry several cell phones because one works in one area, while another does not.

This isn't a cost-effective option for your fleet management and compliance solution, particularly if you are running ELDs on mobile devices. Depending on where your fleet operates, gaps in coverage can range from a mild nuisance to a critical issue impacting compliance, safety, and operations.



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- Inability to accurately locate vehicles in real-time
- Frustration for enforcement and drivers during roadside when transfers don't work
- Potential issues with logs being current during roadside inspections
- Inability to ensure on-time performance
- Inability to rescue loads quickly and easily



SOLUTION

Use an in-cab technology that connects to multiple carrier networks, helping to ensure coverage in sparsely populated areas and areas of spotty coverage for the major wireless providers.

3 Unsuccessful data transfer at roadside inspections



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During roadside inspections, drivers must be able to show their logs. The desired method for this is data transfer from the ELD device to eRODS. If this data transfer isn't successful, fallbacks for the driver are either handing the physical device to the inspecting officer or providing a paper printout (from a printer in the cab).

Success in eRODS data transfer from the ELD varies greatly by supplier. According to the FMCSA, the average rate of successful data transfer across all ELDs was 35% in April 2018, rising to 85% by September 2018. There are several causes for unsuccessful data transfer:

- Specifications for exporting data outlined in the ELD guidelines are highly detailed and require mandatory information (VIN number, USDOT numbers, driver's license). Some ELD providers don't design their systems to make these required fields during setup, and when log data is sent to eRODS, it is seen as an incomplete file, so the transfer fails or has warnings.
- If driving events like yard moves and personal conveyance are not cleared in the ELD, log transfer will fail at roadside.
- If a driver is in a remote area with limited data access, transfer can fail.



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- Unsuccessful eRODS data transfers frustrate enforcement and drivers
- Unsuccessful eRODS data transfers cause delays at roadside for your drivers. A successful eRODS data transfer takes anywhere from 30 seconds to 5 minutes, but using the ELD display fall back method can extend the time required for log review by up to 20-30 minutes
- There is a potential for a driver to be placed out of service if the backup fails; if that happens, the inspector will treat it as a "No record of duty status" and put the driver out of service for a 10-hour minimum rest period (which adds 2 points to the driver's CSA violation score). This can happen if the driver is not well-trained in getting the ELD into inspection mode to show header, log and event information. It can also happen if a driver's printer doesn't work, is discharged, or out of paper.



SOLUTION

- When selecting an ELD, ask the supplier about their eRODS data transfer success rate and what types of problems their customers may be encountering
- Ensure your ELD supplier provides data coverage in your route areas
- Make sure your team is trained and familiar with the fall back solutions for failed transfers during a roadside inspection
- Take the time to ensure your ELD system is set up correctly, with key pieces of data filled in right as you get started. Some ELD suppliers make it easy to get started quickly by skipping over this, but it can hurt you and your drivers at roadside inspections. Key pieces of data to make sure you have in the system include USDOT Number, VIN for your trucks (may need to be manually populated) and CMV power unit number.

4 Buying technology without a future



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SOLUTION

There are many events that will turn some of today's "current" connected ELDs into useless boxes:

- The industry went through the 2G network shutdown in 2016 and 2017.
- Verizon is shuttering its CDMA 3G network at the end of 2019.¹
- AT&T will shut down GSM 3G in 2021.²
- Many AOBDRDs are not firmware upgradeable and need to be replaced to meet ELD requirements. Many of those may require someone to physically upgrade the device (if it can't be done over-the air).
- ELD suppliers may not keep up with changes in regulations, making the ELD non-compliant.

- If you're in the middle of your contract with your ELD supplier and need to switch out or service your in-cab hardware, make sure to get agreement on who covers the costs of the hardware, cabling and any installation services.
- Factor in the operational impacts of any work that needs to be done in terms of driver scheduling, route planning, and renting additional capacity.
- If an ELD is non-compliant or does not function properly, carriers have 8 days to replace the device, creating real headaches for your fleet management team and drivers.

- Technology changes all the time—make sure your supplier is "future-proofing" your investment so it's clear that they are willing to carry the cost of replacement hardware and service costs.
- Keep an eye out for the technology changes that may impact your solution, and make sure your supplier is proactive about helping you plan.
- Ensure your technology provider is up to speed and involved with the regulatory environment and knows what changes are coming and when.

² ["Verizon stops activating CDMA 3G devices as network shutdown looms"](#), Fierce Wireless, Mike Dano, July 17, 2018,

³ ["The Sky is Falling - The end of 2G/3G networks as we know them"](#), Digi-Key Electronics Blog, May 17, 2018,

5 Suppliers providing inadequate service & support



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The same [Overdrive survey](#)³ that highlighted dropped Bluetooth as the #1 ELD problem also showed that poor service and support by ELD suppliers is the second largest problem.

Many suppliers jumped into the ELD game when they saw the opportunity forming with the FMCSA mandate—and many are under-equipped when it comes to support manpower, knowledge of and history with the transportation industry and overall product quality. Still others bolted ELD capabilities to large fleet technology solutions and haven't been able to keep up with demand from the increased number of fleets they are trying to serve.



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- FMCSA allows carriers 8 days to resolve or replace malfunctioning devices under section 395.34. Until the malfunction is investigated and resolved or replaced, drivers must revert to keeping paper logs. It's critical to ensure that there's an established process with the ELD supplier to manage malfunctions and minimize disruption to operations and to drivers
- Problems with ELDs can have a serious impact on driver and carrier compliance, deliveries, driver schedules and revenues if drivers are issued violations or placed out of service because ELDs aren't working
- Fines for HOS violations can add up quickly. Roadside violations start at a few hundred dollars but can escalate into the thousands if logs are missing or if there are extensive form and manner errors
- Increased driver frustration as vendor customer support lacks industry knowledge and ability to properly answer questions about issues



SOLUTION

- Ensure that service and support are part of your upfront conversations with potential ELD suppliers. Make sure you know how the suppliers manage malfunctions
- Ask if the supplier measures Net Promoter Score (NPS), which indicates better customer satisfaction
- Ask the supplier who provides various levels of support, from tier 1 (daily inbound support inquiries) to tier 2 and 3 escalations, and make sure they supply service level agreements for issue resolution
- Ask your ELD supplier for statistics kept on "time to answer" and "time to resolution" for the different support tiers
- Make sure your supplier's support staff has adequate knowledge to handle compliance questions efficiently so your compliance isn't compromised
- Use software solution review sites like Capterra and ELD Ratings to get real input from real customers – you can learn a lot not only about product functionality and how well a solution works, but how the suppliers react when you have problems (which is inevitable)

³ ["ELD headaches: solving the dropped Bluetooth connection issue"](#), Overdrive, Todd Dills, March 29, 2018

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