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Safe Rates: Making road transport safe, fair and sustainable – international campaigns and Korean research

[SAFE RATES | ITF Global](#)

Road transport workers often face intense pressures such as long hours, fatigue, speeding, and vehicle overloading due to economic demands starting from the top of the supply chain. Large companies' low-cost tendering practices and unreasonable delivery demands trickle down to transport companies and, subsequently, to drivers, resulting in low pay, poor working conditions, and increased work intensity. These pressures make dangerous on-road practices almost unavoidable, jeopardizing the safety of all road users. Implementing Safe Rates ensures that drivers are fairly compensated for all their work hours, allowing them to earn a decent living while driving safely. For owner-operators, Safe Rates should cover the costs of vehicle purchase, maintenance, and operation.

Safe Rates can be established through union agreements or legal regulatory systems, which set fair pay and condition standards, hold all industry stakeholders accountable, and involve unions in the process of setting, monitoring, and enforcing these standards. Globally, Safe Rates systems have significantly improved the lives of road transport workers, enhanced road safety, and promoted sustainability. Notably, in New South Wales, Australia, Safe Rates have saved over 205 lives, while in South Korea, the incidence of drivers dozing at the wheel decreased by over 60% after implementation. The International Labour Organisation's 2019 guidelines advocate for these principles, urging member states and industry stakeholders to adopt Safe Rates. The ITF's global Safe Rates Campaign, launched on 22 September 2023, calls for the implementation of these systems, ensuring fair transport pricing, supply chain transparency, compliance, and the protection of trade union rights.

[Korean research shows Safe Rates works: better truck driver pay improves safety](#)

Research into a Safe Rates system which has been in force in South Korea since January 2020 shows it's working. Safe Rates systems set standards for fair pay and working conditions in road transport by law. They make companies at the top of contracting chains responsible for ensuring the standards are met.

Minimum safe rates of pay relieve commercial pressures on road transport drivers that induce unsafe road practices. Safe Rates also enable drivers to be able to provide for themselves and their families, while critically reducing pressure on drivers to drive while fatigued, speed or overload their vehicles. The new research shows the theory behind Safe Rates is working in practice in South Korea. Research into its first eight months was based on two driver surveys conducted before and after it came into effect.

“Drivers reported a decrease in cost-cutting pressures,” said Noel Coard, the International Transport Workers Federation’s (ITF’s) Inland Transport Secretary. “Fatigue, speeding and overloading, the main factors in lorry crashes, all improved. The research confirms that Safe Rates works in Korea. And if it works there, it should be put in place all around the world.”

The main findings in the research are that after Safe Rates was put in place:

- Truck driver pay increased on average by 3.6%
- The number of drivers who experienced drowsiness while driving decreased by 29%.
- The number of drivers who overloaded went down by 39.9%
- The number who speeded reduced by 33.6%

The research also showed that Safe Rates is being undermined by continual violations by clients and transport companies. The system would have an even bigger impact on road safety and industry sustainability if it were properly enforced.

For further information about international “Safe Rates” campaigns

https://www.itfglobal.org/en/search?search_api_fulltext=safe+rates