

Understanding Liability When Truck Drivers Ignore Hours-of-Service Rules in Georgia

How Violating Federal Driving Limits Leads to Catastrophic Crashes

In Georgia, the consequences of [truck accidents](#) are often devastating. These vehicles weigh up to 80,000 pounds and can cause catastrophic damage in a matter of seconds. When the driver behind the wheel is fatigued or pushing beyond federal hours-of-service (HOS) limits, the risks multiply. For victims and their families, a single moment of negligence can result in a lifetime of hardship.

Federal law sets clear limits on the amount of time truckers can drive without a break. These rules are meant to protect everyone on the road. But when drivers ignore those regulations—or when trucking companies pressure them to do so—they put profits above safety. That’s when the legal system steps in.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), we’ve seen time after time how HOS violations lead to devastating injuries and complex liability issues. Our Georgia truck accident lawyers know how to hold negligent parties accountable and fight for full compensation on behalf of our clients.

What Are Hours-of-Service Rules and Why Do They Matter?

The [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration \(FMCSA\)](#) regulates how many hours a commercial truck driver can operate without rest. These hours-of-service rules are designed to prevent driver fatigue, one of the most common and dangerous causes of truck crashes.

Key FMCSA rules include:

- **11-Hour Driving Limit:** Drivers may only drive up to 11 hours after 10 consecutive hours off duty.
- **14-Hour Window:** Drivers cannot drive beyond the 14th hour after coming on duty, even if they take breaks.
- **30-Minute Break Rule:** After 8 hours of driving, a driver must take a break of at least 30 minutes.
- **60/70-Hour Limit:** Drivers cannot drive after 60 hours on duty in 7 days, or 70 hours in 8 days, depending on the schedule.

When truckers violate these limits, they put everyone at risk.

How Often Do Truck Drivers Violate HOS Rules in Georgia?

Despite the clear guidelines, violations are common. According to FMCSA data, hours-of-service violations are consistently among the top safety violations during roadside inspections.

In Georgia, truck drivers often face pressure from their employers to meet unrealistic delivery deadlines. Some drivers falsify logs, disable electronic logging devices (ELDs), or rely on outdated paper logs to conceal violations.

Truckers may drive drowsy to keep up with:

- Tight schedules for perishable goods
- Financial incentives tied to delivery speed
- Pressure from dispatchers or freight brokers

How Do HOS Violations Cause Serious Truck Accidents?

Fatigue impacts a trucker's reaction time, decision-making, and focus—similar to driving under the influence. When a driver has been on the road too long, even a small mistake can have fatal consequences.

Common fatigue-related crashes include:

- **Rear-End Collisions:** A tired driver may not be able to brake in time.
- **Drifting Accidents:** Drowsy truckers may veer into another lane or off the road.
- **Intersection Crashes:** Delayed reactions can lead to failure to yield or running a red light.

When sleep deprivation combines with the massive force of a tractor-trailer, victims often suffer life-altering injuries.

Who Can Be Held Liable When Truck Drivers Ignore HOS Rules?

HOS violations don't just point to truck driver negligence. They may reveal broader issues within a company's operations.

Parties that may be liable include:

- **The Truck Driver:** For knowingly exceeding hours-of-service limits or falsifying logs.
- **The [Trucking Company](#):** For encouraging or requiring unsafe driving practices.
- **Third-Party Logistics Companies or Brokers:** If they created unreasonable delivery demands.
- **Maintenance Contractors:** If they contributed to a [mechanical failure](#) that made the crash worse.

[Proving liability](#) in these cases requires a thorough investigation into the company's policies, schedules, and driver records.

How Is Evidence of HOS Violations Collected After a Truck Accident?

To build a strong case, your attorney will look for signs of rule-breaking using several key pieces of evidence:

- Electronic Logging Device (ELD) data
- [GPS and telematics records](#)
- Driver logbooks (paper or digital)
- Fuel receipts and toll data
- Dispatch and scheduling records
- Driver cell phone records
- Witness testimony or surveillance footage

Uncovering this evidence can be difficult without legal pressure. That's why it's critical to act quickly and work with a legal team that knows how to issue preservation letters and subpoenas.

What Damages Can Victims Recover in an HOS Violation Case?

If you were injured because a trucker broke the law and drove while fatigued, you may be eligible to recover damages such as:

- **Medical Expenses:** Emergency care, surgery, therapy, medications
- **Lost Income:** Time off work, reduced future earnings
- **Pain and Suffering:** Physical and emotional trauma
- **Loss of Enjoyment of Life:** Impacts to daily routines, hobbies, relationships
- **Punitive Damages:** In some cases, courts may award extra compensation to punish egregious conduct

Each case is different, but HOS violations can strengthen your claim for full compensation.

What Steps Should You Take After a Truck Accident in Georgia?

After a crash, protecting your health and legal rights should be your top priority. Here's what to do:

1. Get medical attention immediately, even if you feel okay.
2. Call the police to create an official crash report.
3. Take photos or videos of the scene, vehicles, and injuries if possible.
4. Get contact information from witnesses and involved parties.
5. Do not speak to the trucking company's insurer without legal counsel.

6. Call a Georgia truck accident lawyer as soon as possible.

Quick action [preserves evidence](#) and prevents companies from covering up wrongdoing.

How Does Gary Martin Hays & Associates Prove Liability in HOS Violation Cases?

Our legal team conducts thorough investigations to uncover violations that trucking companies would rather keep hidden. We:

- Analyze ELD data and logbooks
- Hire [accident reconstruction](#) experts
- Review truck maintenance and dispatch records
- Subpoena internal company documents
- Depose drivers, supervisors, and corporate reps

If the other side won't offer a fair settlement, we're ready to take your case to court.

How Long Do You Have to File a Truck Accident Claim in Georgia?

In Georgia, the statute of limitations for personal injury claims is typically two years from the date of the crash. If you miss that deadline, you may lose your right to pursue compensation.

That's why it's best to contact a lawyer right away. Early legal action makes it easier to secure time-sensitive evidence like ELD logs or GPS records before they're deleted.

Why Hiring a Georgia Truck Accident Lawyer Matters

Trucking companies and [their insurers](#) have teams of attorneys working to protect their interests. You need someone in your corner who understands their tactics and knows how to fight back.

At Gary Martin Hays & Associates, we've helped thousands of injured Georgians stand up to powerful corporations and win the compensation they deserve. We won't let fatigue, greed, or negligence go unchecked.

Hold Trucking Companies Accountable for Fatigue-Related Crashes

If you or someone you love was hurt in a truck crash caused by driver fatigue or hours-of-service violations, don't wait. The legal team at Gary Martin Hays & Associates can help you demand justice and accountability. We offer free consultations and don't charge a fee unless we win your case. [Contact us today](#) for a free consultation.