

With Trucker Shortage Looming, Focus Shifts to the Next Generation

Virtual-reality simulator training, aided by government support and local initiatives, is helping ready an urgently needed new generation of American truckers. ATS's John Kearney says that while progress is still slow, the numbers look encouraging.

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. ([PRWEB](#)) February 17, 2020 -- The Federal Motor Safety Administration (FMCSA) has recently opened a new website to help 18- to 20-year-olds who possess the U.S. military equivalent of a commercial driver's license find and apply for jobs with interstate trucking companies. During an initial pilot program, which is slated to run for up to three years, the safety records of these drivers will be compared to the records of a control group of drivers to determine if a one- to three-year difference in drivers' ages is a critical safety factor.(1) "Currently," says [John Kearney, CEO, Advanced Training Systems LLC](#), "drivers under 21 are not permitted to take part in interstate commerce." Kearney, whose company is a leading designer and manufacturer of virtual simulators for driver training, among other applications, adds, "I firmly believe that the results of this study will demonstrate that 18- to 20-year-olds—properly trained—are mature enough to be skilled and safe commercial truck drivers."

Kearney is not alone in this opinion. There is a page in FMCSA's website on which approved trucking companies are permitted to advertise job openings under the Under 21 Military Drivers Pilot Program. As of early February, nearly two dozen interstate trucking companies with headquarters ranging from Oregon to Massachusetts had posted openings on the site.² Meanwhile, Kearney notes, the U.S. motor freight industry continues to have some 60,000 drivers fewer than it would need to be fully staffed, a total widely expected to double by the end of this decade.⁽³⁾

Given these numbers and given that nearly two-thirds of American high school graduates do not go to college, but begin their working careers at about age 18, a logical source of future truck drivers would be [high-school vocational education programs](#). (4) One rapidly growing such initiative is the Truck Driving Program offered by Patterson High School in Patterson, CA. Backed by the support of national and local trucking fleets and the school's superintendent, and aided by government grants, Patterson High's program uses the combination of a textbook and ATS driving simulators to lay the groundwork for enrollment in a standard commercial driver's license training program.⁽⁵⁾

There are, notes ATS's Kearney, over 24,000 public high schools in the United States producing an estimated 3.3 million graduates each year, of whom about two million will bypass college and go directly into the workforce. Given that the average base salary for a truck driver in the U.S. is nearly \$60,000, it seems likely that programs like Patterson High's could go a long way toward alleviating the driver shortage. (6) (7) (8)

"They can and they will," says Kearney. "One of the keys to driver safety is simulation, which solves a classic training dilemma: [how do you safely prepare trainees to deal with dangerous situations?](#) Patterson High is the first high school in the country to adopt this technology, and they have really raised the bar for training. They're pushing right now for all the high schools in their county to create this kind of program, and if that succeeds, they'll move on to the state level. This is what the trucking industry needs; if we can get to them before they've maybe taken a different path, and train them properly, we'll be well on our way to providing the new generation of drivers we so badly need."

About Advanced Training Systems:

Advanced Training Systems (ATS) is a high-tech simulator technology and engineering firm that has revolutionized the design and manufacture of advanced training systems to improve training and create safer drivers. ATS, the holder of multiple patents in high-tech training using simulation, has as its mission to provide this cutting-edge adaptive training to all involved in the transportation industry at an affordable cost, resulting in safer drivers/ operators. For more information, visit www.atstrainingsystems.com

1. "FMCSA offers help for young military drivers to find jobs," Fleet Owner, October 29, 2019, fleetowner.com/resource-center/regulations/article/21704420/fmcsa-offers-help-for-young-military-drivers-to-find-jobs.
2. "Under 21 Military Drivers Job Opportunities," U.S. Department of Transportation, 2019, cms8.fmcsa.dot.gov/under21military.
3. Black, Thomas, "U.S. Truck Driver Shortage Is On Course to Double in a Decade," Bloomberg, July 24, 2019, bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-07-24/u-s-truck-driver-shortage-is-on-course-to-double-in-a-decade.
4. "US Census: Americans are More Educated than Ever Before," VOA Learning English, August 29, 2018, learningenglish.voanews.com/a/us-census-bureau-americans-are-more-educated-than-ever-before/4546489.html.
5. Jaillet, James. "California high school program puts students in the driver's seat," Commercial Carrier Journal, June 4, 2019, ccjdigital.com/california-high-school-program-puts-students-in-the-drivers-seat/.
6. "Best U.S. High Schools," U.S. News & World Report, 2019, usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/national-rankings.
7. "Public High School Graduation Rates," National Center for Education Statistics, May 2019, nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp.
8. "How much does a truck driver make in the United States?", indeed.com, 2020, indeed.com/career/truck-driver/salaries.



Contact Information

Karla Jo Helms

JOTO PR

<http://www.jotopr.com>

727-777-5140

Kimberly Zambrello

JOTO PR

<http://www.jotopr.com>

727-777-4622

Online Web 2.0 Version

You can read the online version of this press release [here](#).