

NEWS & INSIGHTS

AEB systems for tractor-trailers are coming, we just don't know when

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A new federal rule requiring automatic braking systems (AEB) on light vehicles by 2029 will soon be in place, but commercial truck drivers and trucking companies don't have to worry about the rule – yet.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [announced the final rule](#) earlier this month. Once it goes into effect on July 8, 2024, large manufacturers have until September 2029 to make the AEB system standard on all “light” vehicles – passenger cars and trucks with a gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds or less. Small manufacturers of cars will have until September 2030 to make the AEB standard. The NHTSA wrote in the rule that it knew of just a dozen of these small manufacturers in the country. They manufacture either luxury/ultra-luxury

vehicles, alternative electric vehicles and modified vehicles from other manufacturers.

While it may sound like a win for commercial drivers to not have to worry about this rule, it's not. That's because the NHTSA is also [in the process of rulemaking](#) to decide when "heavy" vehicles, including tractor-trailers and other vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of more than 10,000 pounds, will have to be equipped with AEB. The organization announced in 2023 that it is working with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to work out the details of any proposed rule.

The rule could cost the trucking industry tens of millions of dollars to equip trucks with the AEB systems, but the NHTSA said this has everything to do with safety. The organization estimates that the braking systems can prevent nearly 20,000 annual rear-end accidents where a truck is the striking vehicle, saving 155 lives and preventing more than 8,800 injuries.

Currently, there has been no rule for heavy vehicles, such as commercial tractors, proposed, and there are no indications of when any proposed rule will be announced. That means there is no deadline for heavy vehicle to be equipped with AEB.

But the rule is likely coming, and trucking companies should be ready to adjust. Since there is no rule yet, it's unknown whether vehicles manufactured before the AEB deadline will be grandfathered in (although they likely will).

But there is no doubt vehicles equipped with AEB systems will be more expensive. Whether you're a small or large trucking company, those new costs will affect your bottom line. Even if that deadline is five or six years from being enforced (similar to the passenger car rule), trucking companies can begin to plan for those extra costs, either conservatively or closer to what their data says will be the cost increases.

If you have any questions about AEB systems and their effect -financially or in terms of safety - please [contact me](#) or any member of the Saxton & Stump [Trucking and Commercial Transportation Group](#).

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