Data, Performance, and the Destabilization of Expertise

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accountability
behavioral effects

black boxes “do work” apart from the data they gather and process...

because people negotiate social life around them—and the uncertainty they produce
Your 60-second trucking primer

• Truckers as human infrastructure
  – “if you bought it, a truck brought it”
  – 3 million long-haul truckers

• Political economy of trucking
  – Deregulation → high competition
  – Driver shortage and turnover

• Trucking culture
  – 95% male, autonomous, resistant, romantic
  – Trucking as manhood
We tore up all of our swindle sheets
And left ‘em settin’ on the scales.

– “Convoy,” C.W. McCall (1975)

I.C.C. is checking on down the line
I’m a little over weight, my logbook’s way behind
But nothing bothers me tonight
I can dodge all the scales all right
Six days on the road and I’m gonna make it home tonight.

– “Six Days on the Road,” Dave Dudley (1963)
Summary

1 Day Graph For:

Date: 12/9/2009, Terminal Start Time 12:00am (PST), Kms Driven 396.2

Available Driving: 7:27
Available On Duty: 7:30

Current Sleeper Berth: 0:00
Previous Sleeper Berth: 0:00

3Km N of VERNON, BC 12/9/2009 10:49 AM
How do data collection mediate interactions between truckers and (human) inspectors?
human/machine enforcement hybridity

“Spot” inspections → discretion
Monitors = source of anxiety; nonstandard interfaces
Decoy compliance

Qualcomm eLog decal source

Co driver and I desire to affix one of those "dive is using electronic logs" decals on our truck. I think it also has the Qualcomm logo.

I searched the web to no avail. Does anyone know of a source? I'll pay postage if anyone has a couple laying around.

My next idea is to check with service centers, but seems silly to waste fuel to acquire a couple decals.

Thanks!

Re: Qualcomm eLog decal source

A sign shop can make one up for you. I'm surprised drivers who do not have electronic logs have not yet done so in large numbers. It is not a crime to display such information and the scale cop may roll you through.
Inspecting paper logs aimed at uncovering internal inconsistencies. An officer uses their own vehicle as a workstation. Time, distance = resources to establish authority.
Inspecting electronic logs

inspection takes place in the truck: incompetence visible, attention attenuated

reluctantly collaborative; officer relies on driver’s help

time, distance = sources of vulnerability for officer
Black box as prop for trucker and cop

performative flashpoint around which social interaction is structured and professional expertise is performed

illegibility as a source of bias:

- officer discretion + anxiety \(\rightarrow\)
- decoy compliance + less cursory inspections \(\rightarrow\)
- fewer violations for electronic logs
if we want accountable data systems, we need to recognize how uncertainty and bias inhere in black-boxed systems ...

... but we can’t stop the inquiry at the box’s perimeter – we must attend to how they operate as components of broader social environments, and how people negotiate their interests around them
... for which we need qualitative social science!