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Last updated February 23, 2007

## Cross Border Truck Safety Inspection Program

### News

DOT 21-07

Friday, February 23, 2007

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### **New Program to Allow U.S. Trucks into Mexico for the First Time Ever, Change Way Some Mexican Trucks Operate Within the United States**

El Paso, Texas – U.S. trucks will for the first time be allowed to make deliveries in Mexico under a year-long pilot program that expands cross border trucking operations with Mexico, U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters announced today during a visit to truck inspection facilities in El Paso, Texas.

U.S. trucks will get to make deliveries into Mexico while a select group of Mexican trucking companies will be allowed to make deliveries beyond the 20-25 mile commercial zones currently in place along the Southwest border.

Secretary Peters said the new demonstration program was designed to simplify a process that currently requires Mexican truckers to stop and wait for U.S. trucks to arrive and transfer cargo. She said this process wastes money, drives up the cost of goods, and leaves trucks loaded with cargo idling inside U.S. borders. The Secretary added that under current rules, U.S. trucks are not allowed into Mexico because the United States refused to implement provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement that would have permitted safe cross-border trucking.

“The United States has never shied away from opportunities to compete, to open new markets and to trade with the world. Now that safety and security programs are in place, the time has come for us to move forward on this longstanding promise with Mexico,” **Secretary Peters** said.

“We are committed to retaining a high level of security and safety standards under this program,” said **Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff**. “The tough security measures we already have in place will remain unchanged, resulting in a smart and secure approach to safeguarding the border, while allowing for American and Mexican carriers to deliver cargo outside of arbitrary commercial zones.”

“Today's announcement is another sign of the strength of the U.S.-Mexico relationship and a further step towards making our economies globally competitive, promoting mutual economic growth and prosperity while continuing to protect the safety of our borders,” said **Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez**.

“Safety is the number one priority and strict U.S. safety standards won't change,” **Secretary Gutierrez** continued. “We will continue to work closely with President Calderon and his administration on ways we can further enhance the commerce of our countries and the competitiveness of our hemisphere without sacrificing safety or security.”

Secretary Peters noted that the Department of Transportation has put in place a rigorous inspection program to ensure the safe operation of Mexican trucks crossing the border. Yesterday, Peters and Mexican Secretary of Communications and Transportation Luis Téllez announced a program to have U.S. inspectors conduct in-person safety audits to make sure that participating Mexican companies comply with U.S. safety regulations. The regulations require all Mexican truck drivers to hold a valid commercial drivers license, carry proof they are medically fit, comply with all U.S. hours-of-service rules and be able to understand questions and directions in English.

Secretary Peters said those Mexican truck companies that may be allowed to participate in the one-year program will all be required to have insurance with a U.S. licensed firm and meet all U.S. safety standards. Companies that meet these standards will be allowed to make international pick up and deliveries only and will not be able to move goods from one U.S. city for delivery to another, haul hazardous materials or transport passengers.

The first Mexican trucks to be authorized under the program will begin traveling beyond U.S. border areas once the initial in-person safety inspections are done and proof-of-insurance verified. Secretary Peters noted that with the announcement of the program, Mexico will begin to consider applications from U.S. trucking firms for licensing rights to operate within Mexico. Approximately 100 U.S. operators would be licensed by Mexico for cross-border operations.

In 2001, Congress authorized the cross border inspection program and listed 22 safety requirements that had to be in place before other steps were implemented. The Secretary noted that the Department's independent Inspector General's reports have confirmed success in meeting the congressional requirements. In addition, Secretary Peters said the Department has invested \$500 million since 1995 to modernize border safety facilities and hire and train the over 500 federal and state inspectors who inspect trucks crossing the border every day.

“We have years of experience, we have a rigorous safety inspection plan in place and we have the facilities and the trained professionals to carry it out,” Secretary Peters said. “Through this new pilot program, we are finding a better way to do business with one of this nation's largest trading partners, and in doing so, bringing U.S. drivers more opportunity, U.S. consumers more buying power and the U.S. economy even more momentum,” she added.

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