Abstracts

Industry-wide Shortage of Truck Drivers: Current Conditions and Future Prospects

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Since around 2017, the logistics industry in Japan has been dealing with what analysts refer to as a "trucking crisis" or a "home delivery crisis." Despite rising demand for truck delivery services, a shortage of drivers has meant that the distribution capacity of logistics providers remains insufficient to meet the demand. As the number of drivers continues to decline, over the medium to long term, logistics providers will start to experience delays in delivery, and they may lack the capacity to accept more business even if they want to do so. In this paper we will discuss conditions in the logistics and truck delivery industries, the shortage of truck drivers and the corresponding shortfall in truck transport capacity. We will highlight the demographic trends affecting the number of licensed drivers, and the fact that a rising percentage of prospective workers are aging or elderly individuals. Despite this shortage of drivers, working conditions are harsh with long working hours and relatively low wages. We will quantify these conditions, and examine some of the efforts being made by companies in the industry to provide more competitive wages and shorter working hours. Finally, individual logistics providers may lack the wherewithal to address the shortage of drivers and the so-called "trucking crisis" by themselves. We will discuss the reasons why the solution may require greater cooperation between logistics providers and their customers, as well as a restructuring of the underlying conditions of Japan's logistics industry.

Changes in Policies Related to Reducing Working Hours in the Trucking Industry

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This article examines measures taken in the trucking industry in response to the revision of the Labor Standards Act that tightened working hour regulations. The actual working hours of truck drivers are approximately 20% longer than an average worker's, so there has been concern that a reduction in working hours would disrupt logistics. Two legal amendments had a particularly large impact: first, the 2008 amendment to the Labor Standards Act that raised the premium rate for overtime work exceeding 60 hours per month, and second, the 2018 amendment to the Labor Standards Act that introduced a ceiling on overtime work. In response to these legal amendments, the government took measures to reduce the burden on truck drivers, which targeted not only logistics companies but also shipping companies that request the transportation of goods and shipping companies that receive goods. In addition, the government implemented policies to raise trucking freight rates. This paper clarifies how the government came to undertake these measures based on related documents and minutes of council meetings, news published by trucking industry associations and trade unions, and interviews with those involved. The article then discusses the characteristics of these measures and their significance from the perspective of industrial relations.

Effects of Irregular Work Schedules Including Night and Early Morning Start of Work on Blood Pressure and Arteriosclerosis among Japanese Truck Drivers

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Overwork-related deaths and disorders due to cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases (known as "Karoshi") occur most frequently in truck drivers in Japan. In addition to long working hours, irregular work schedules, irregular sleep, and a history of hypertension are major evaluation criteria to determine compensation for Karoshi. Therefore, the present field study aimed to investigate the effects of an irregular work schedule on blood pressure and arteriosclerosis in long-haul and local truck drivers. A total of 67 long-haul truck drivers (mean age 51.7) and 60 local truck drivers (mean age 51.0) participated in a one-month consecutive survey. Off-duty sleep at home was objectively measured using a sheet-type sleep monitor during the study period. Blood pressure (BP) and arteriosclerosis (API, AVI) were measured before and after each work period. The multilevel model for increased BP showed a significant association with

frequently leaving bed, long trip days, and early wake-up time in the long-haul truck drivers. Furthermore, the multilevel model for increased BP, API, and AVI showed a significant association with late work time (night work), early wake-up time (morning work), and large difference in departure time in the local truck drivers. The results suggested that night and early morning work, irregular work time, and large fluctuations in work start time and time in bed are associated with a risk of cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases.

Improvements in the Trucking Industry to Improve Labor Productivity

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In response to the declining working-age population in Japan, there is an urgent need to enhance labor productivity, especially in the truck transportation industry responsible for logistics. This paper explains the significance of truck transportation in domestic freight, highlighting the persistently low labor productivity in the sector. It delves into the critical issues of labor shortages and productivity in the truck transportation industry, thinking about the relationships between the number of truck drivers required to meet transportation demand and labor productivity. Several specific improvement cases are then introduced, including those recognized at a conference where logistics improvement case studies were presented. The purpose is to provide tips for addressing challenges associated with a declining working-age population, labor shortages, and the need for increased productivity in the trucking sector. In addition, the case studies discuss human resource management challenges that management must address to achieve improved labor productivity in the trucking industry.

Working Time Regulations in the Transportation Industry: Focusing on the Additional Wages for Overtime under Article 37 of the Labor Standards Act

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It can be said that lawsuits regarding the claim for additional wages under Article 37 of the Labor Standards Act in the transportation industry have been increasing in recent years. This article attempts to clarify the current situation about judgments related to this issue. Regarding the wage system for drivers, it can be noted that there are many allowances in addition to the basic salary, and in particular, a commission-based wage is provided separately from wages calculated based on time, such as daily or monthly rates. One contributing factor to the complexity of the system is the regulation of additional wages for overtime work under Article 37 of the Labor Standards Act. For drivers working outside the workplace, which makes supervision difficult, a piece-rate wage system is suitable, but complex wage payment methods have been developed to comply with Article 37 of the Labor Standards Act. Disputes have arisen frequently over the interpretation of these complex wage systems. According to the case law, additional wages for overtime work, even if not calculated according to the prescribed method of the Labor Standards Act, are not in violation of Article 37 if two conditions are met: first, the distinction between the "regular wage (base wage)" and the additional wage is clear (discernibility/discernment criteria); and second, the amount of the additional wage does not fall below the amount calculated by the statutory method for additional wages. In the transportation industry, there have been disputes about whether or not a wage system that can be considered to be essentially an all-commission system meets the discernment criteria. Recently, a series of significant judgments have been issued, such as the International Motor Vehicle Case, Toll Express Japan Case, and Kumamoto Comprehensive Transportation Case. Based on an analysis of these cases, wage systems considered to be essentially all-commission systems are not necessarily negated, but they tend to be judged as not meeting the discernment criteria.