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[Eleanor Lamb](#) | Staff Reporter  
March 16, 2020 1:15 PM, EDT

# Coronavirus Prompts Some State Groups to Postpone Truck Driving Championships



Competitors at the 2019 Louisiana Truck Driving Championships in Baton Rouge, La. (John Ballance for Louisiana Motor Transport Association)

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As they evaluate the implications of the coronavirus, some state trucking associations have adjusted the schedules of their truck driving championships.

The state championships, which determine the qualifiers who advance to American Trucking Associations' National Truck Driving Championships and National Step Van Driving Championships, are slated to run through spring and early summer. The national competition, scheduled for Aug. 19-22 in Indianapolis, is still on, according to Jacob Pierce, executive director of ATA's Safety Management Council and Transportation Security Council.

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Chance McNeely, executive director of the Louisiana Motor Transport Association, said he and his team are planning to postpone their state championship. Louisiana was supposed to kick off the season with a competition scheduled for March 27-28. McNeely said he doesn't have a new date cemented.

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##### McNeely

McNeely said LMTA holds its event early in the season so it can use the parking lot of a water park owned by one of the association's members. Once the water park opens and guest vehicles occupy the parking lot, that venue will probably no longer be an option.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Louisiana as of March 14. Citing the CDC's recent recommendation to halt gatherings of 50 people or more for eight weeks, McNeely said the association's event planning is in somewhat of a limbo.

"That throws a whole wrench into everything we do," McNeely told Transport Topics.

#### Taryn Shekitka, director of operations for the South Carolina Trucking Association

##### Shekitka

Taryn Shekitka, director of operations for the South Carolina Trucking Association, said the group will also be postponing its truck driving championship, which was scheduled for April 24-25. She said the association doesn't have a new date yet because the team will have to coordinate with a hotel for availability. Shekitka said the competition was one of four events SCTA had slated for late March and April, all of which have been postponed. As of March 14, CDC indicates 12 cases of the virus have been reported in South Carolina.

Also scheduled for April 24-25 was the Tennessee Trucking Association's championship, which has been rescheduled to June 26-27. CDC reports 18 cases of COVID-19 in Tennessee as of March 14.



Hems

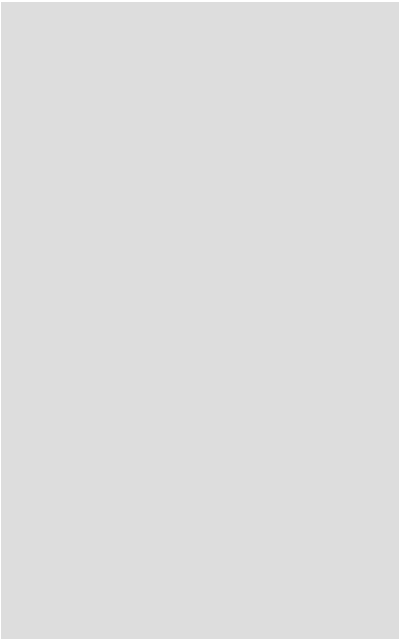
Trucking Association of New York President Kendra Hems said her group is not yet planning to postpone its championship, currently scheduled for June 5-6. New York is one of the states that has been most impacted by the virus. According to CDC, some 325 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in New York as of March 16.

In terms of operations, state association officials indicated that business has proceeded as usual as their teams continue to keep members updated with information.

“By and large, my membership is doing their best to maintain normal operations,” McNeely said. “In any time of crisis, trucks are the first in and the last out. I think it would take quite an event to have trucks not on the road, and we’re nowhere close to that at this point.”

Donna England, vice president of safety and member services for the Tennessee Trucking Association, said carriers have been cautious but continue to make their deliveries.

“Trucks still keep trucking,” England said.



Shekitka said the association has been sending members information on event postponements, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s emergency declaration granting hours-of-service relief, and health bulletins.

“We’re just trying to do what’s right in light of the situation,” Shekitka said.

Noting that truckers generally don’t have extensive interaction with shippers or load their own trailers, McNeely expressed optimism about drivers being able to avoid coming into contact with ill people.

“Generally speaking, the American truck driver is probably more insulated against this than the average worker, and that’s a good thing because I don’t know if there’s any worker that’s needed more now than a truck driver,” McNeely said.

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