

TO THE POINT SAFETY MEASUREMENT SYSTEM FOR COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES

If you thought no one was looking over your shoulder at your commercial motor vehicle safety program results, you're wrong. Your customers and vendors are! They can monitor the success or failure of your program online through the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Safety Measurement System.

The Safety Measurement System (SMS) is an online evaluation system that monitors commercial motor vehicle (CMV) carriers. The system measures the safety performance of companies operating large trucks, buses and/or transporting hazardous materials, and is available for viewing by the public at <https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/sms/>. All that's needed to view your company's results is your DOT number or company name and the state where you're headquartered.

The SMS initiative improves the effectiveness of the FMCSA's enforcement and compliance programs. It's the agency's next step in achieving its mission to reduce commercial motor vehicle crashes, fatalities, and injuries. The data used by the system to evaluate your safety operations is collected over a rolling 24-month period from DOT roadside inspections of vehicles and drivers, traffic violations, crash reports, post-crash inspections, and on-site investigations. The data is updated monthly.

The data is organized across seven Behavioral Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories called BASICs for short. The seven BASICs are:

1. Unsafe Driving — The dangerous or careless operations of a commercial motor vehicle. Citations for speeding, reckless driving, failure to obey traffic control device, improper lane change, following too closely, etc. impact this BASIC.

2. Crash Indicator — A history or pattern of high crash involvement, including frequency and severity. Data is collected from law enforcement crash reports and crashes not reported that are discovered during on-site investigations. This BASIC is not public, but only viewable by law enforcement or by a motor carrier that is logged into its own profile.

3. Hours-of-Service (HOS) Compliance — Violations of the FMCSA regulations addressing driver fatigue and drivers operating more hours than allowed under HOS regulations — violating the 14 hour rule, 60/70 hour rule, 11 hour rule, falsely reporting Record of Duty Status, failure to meet Record of Duty Status form/manner requirements, etc.

4. Vehicle Maintenance — Failure to meet FMCSA requirements to properly maintain a commercial motor vehicle and to prevent shifting loads, spilled or dropped cargo or overloading. Common violations include operating an out-of-service vehicle, operating a vehicle with inoperative brakes, lights or other mechanical defects, improper load securement, etc.

5. Controlled Substances/Alcohol — Operating a commercial motor vehicle by drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications.

6. Hazardous Materials (HM) Compliance — Failure to meet FMCSA regulations to safely transport hazardous materials. Violations include failing to mark, label or placard in accordance with the regulations, not properly securing a package containing HM, allowing packaging to leak HM, etc. This BASIC is not available for viewing by the public.

7. Driver Fitness — Operation of a CMV by drivers who are unfit to do so due to lack of training, experience, or medical qualification. Violations include failure to have the proper CDL, crash reports citing lack of experience or medical reasons as a cause or contributing factor, no medical certificate, no road test or certificate, driver not physically qualified, etc.

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The SMS groups carriers by BASIC with other carriers that have a similar number of safety events (e.g. crashes, inspections, or violations) and then assigns a percentile performance measure for each BASIC. These measures can be found quickly by running a Complete Profile for the carrier. The lower the performance measure score the better the carrier. The formula for calculating the measure varies by BASIC and the scale used for performance measure varies by BASIC (i.e. 0 to 4 scale for Unsafe Driving, 0 to 1 scale for HOS, 0 to 8 scale for Maintenance, etc.) The bottom line is, the closer the measure score is to ZERO, the better the company is performing. The FMCSA intervention process for carriers with poor SMS results is progressive. Interventions range from warning letters and targeted roadside inspections to focused onsite investigations, notice of violations and ultimately, Operations Out-of-Service orders.

The following tips can help you in keeping your BASIC percentiles below the intervention thresholds:

- Get serious about your Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIR) by taking it from an end of the shift "pencil whip" process to a true inspection with deficiencies noted, shared, and corrected immediately. Get your maintenance shop/vendor on board with the process.
- Align your DVIR forms with the Maintenance BASIC's most common violations. Start using an electronic system for DVIRs that your driver can complete using a mobile phone and submit electronically.
- Campaign against speeding. Make driving the speed limit part of your company's culture. Train, educate and discipline to instill a culture of not speeding. Govern your trucks. Make sure your dispatchers are realistic about the time it takes to get a load delivered, so they don't put the truck driver in a bind.

- Implement the use of on-board recorders to replace paper logs.
- Implement a formal Journey Management Program.
- Maintain impeccable records and Driver Qualification (DQ) Files.
- Stay on top of the expiration dates for driver physicals, medical cards and CDLs. Notify drivers well in advance of pending expiration dates. Appoint someone to strictly manage the process. Implement a zero-tolerance policy with discipline for violations.
- Train drivers to properly load their truck to prevent shifting loads, spills, and leaks, dropped cargo and overloading.
- Load/transport hazardous materials only if it is properly packaged, marked, and labeled. Placard and load HM according to established regulations (FMCSRs and HMRs).
- Abide by cell phone, texting, and seat belt laws.

The SMS can be a harsh reality for companies whose fleet safety efforts are lacking. Savvy companies take advantage of its easy online access and use it to vet their vendors and better understand the culture of their business partners. Make it a tool that promotes your company as you protect your employees and assets, not one that detracts.

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