

TRUCK TALK

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FMCSA Update

Mr. John Hill, the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, recently stated that strong motor carrier safety enforcement equals a level playing field for motor carriers. He went on to say that the transportation industry now has the lowest fatality rate (2.3 per hundred million miles traveled), but that the figure is beginning to plateau, and does not appear to be going down. In order to reverse this trend and further reduce the crash fatality rate, there are several areas that will be addressed by the FMCSA:

- Continued enforcement. Last year, the various enforcement agencies conducted over 3 million inspections of commercial motor vehicles. In addition, 4,500 fatality crashes were recorded, along with another 114,000 injury crashes. The enforcement agencies now have the ability and the inclination to match a driver's CDL up with crash during a roadside inspection. The driver's MVR is pulled at the time of the inspection using the CDL number, which is immediately matched with crash data. The underlying premise is that drivers with multiple convictions are more likely to be involved in a crash. They can also match that data to motor carriers who have been identified as at risk in the Accident Safety Evaluation Area in SafeStat.

- Non-Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Program – 58% of the first harmful event in a crash involving a large truck and at least one other vehicle was committed by the driver of the "other" car. The FMCSA is figuring out way to get to the drivers of the "other" cars. In order to get funding from the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, the enforcement officials had to conduct an inspection of a commercial motor vehicle. Now, however, up to 5% of MCSAP funds can be allocated to dealing with the "other" car. There are currently 19 states that are involved in a program to ticket aggressive car drivers. In some states, a enforcement official will actually ride with a trucker, equipped with a video camera and radio. When aggressive car driving is encountered, the trooper can radio to a fellow trooper in a "chase car", who will cite the aggressive car driver.

- Technological advances – FMCSA is looking to promote the use of new technology to promote safe driving. Adaptive Cruise Control automatically controls the throttle, independent of driver actions. The Lane Departure Warning system reduces unintended lane departures. A Forward Looking Collision Warning system will reduce rear-end collisions, and the Stability Control system reduces the throttle and applies the brakes without driver involvement.

- Congestion problems – the FMCSA realizes the need for a National Strategy to combat the problem of highway congestion. Items being considered include Corridors of the Future, which are traffic lanes that allow for movement of certain vehicles and certain freight in dedicated truck lanes. Also, urban partnerships need to be established to develop ways to move freight more efficiently, assisted by federal funding.

There is still no definite timetable for the Accident SEA score to be reinstated on a motor carrier's SafeStat report. Apparently some Intra-State truck crashes are included in the Federal Crash Rate, which is supposed to be carriers involved in Inter-State commerce. It is speculated that as many as 40-50% of fatal crashes counted in the Federal data actually occurred in Intra-State operations.

FMCSA is working on a program called COMPASS, which is a re-working of the way FMCSA relates their data. The idea is for a motor carrier to have access to a single customized portal for more specific information regarding the DOT and Commercial Motor Vehicle enforcement. You must register with the FMCSA to obtain a PIN number, as the information in COMPASS is for you and you alone (unless you choose to share the information). It will supposedly bring all the databases together to one source so you do not have to go to several sources to obtain information. This is very new and was just announced, so more information will be forthcoming as it becomes available. Please go to www.cwgins.com and click on Loss Control, where you will find a link to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's web-site for more information.