

# TRUCK TALK

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## Pre-Employment Screening Program

### WHAT IS P S P?

PSP stands for **Pre-employment Screening Process**. OK you may say, **WHAT** is that? PSP is a program initiated by the FMCSA to allow motor carriers to improve their ability to make more informed hiring decisions by providing electronic access to information on a driver's background that has never been available previously.

### WHY DO I NEED THIS INFORMATION?

In section 391 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, a motor carrier is charged with the responsibility of making an investigation into the past history of a prospective driver. This includes (but is not limited to) a State Motor Vehicle Record and the Safety Performance history of that driver with DOT regulated employers for the previous 3 years. A sad, cold, hard fact in this investigative process is that many motor carriers place returning this information to an inquiring party at a very low priority.

With little information to go on, history tells us that a hiring decision tends to be made quickly and with fewer documented facts than most would like in the hope that a Safety Performance history will eventually be received. **BUT**, if a carrier could receive, within a couple of hours, that **MORE** information than most MVRs and Safety Performance history inquiries produce, they would be much more certain of hiring the **RIGHT** individual for their company. PSP is information on the individual driver that is obtained from previous motor carriers' MCMIS (Motor Carrier Management Information System). This information will include roadside violations of the 7 BASICS for the past 3 years that are contained in the SMS system. In addition, it will contain all reported (by authorities) accidents for the past 5 years – some of which might not even be included in State MVR reports.

### HOW DO I OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION?

Since the PSP report is currently available only in an electronic format, the fastest, easiest way is to sign up on the web site: [www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov), where complete information is available, as well as links to follow to open a PSP account. You can also call the PSP customer service center toll free at 877-642-9499 if you have any questions or want additional information.

### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

This service is really quite affordable when you recognize the potential benefits for your company. Motor carriers with fewer than 100 trucks are charged a registration fee of \$25.00; for motor carriers with over 100 trucks, the fee is \$100.00. After the registration process is completed, individual reports can be obtained for \$10.00 each (regardless of the size of the carrier). Individual

drivers can request their PSP report for \$10.00 (no subscription fee). All transactions are handled online; there is no 'office' where this information can be obtained at this time.

## **CAN I GET THIS INFORMATION ANY OTHER WAY?**

Not at this time. However, within the last month the FMCSA did open up opportunities for private services (most likely the same people who obtain MVR records for motor carriers) to begin providing this information as a part of the services they offer. At the time of this writing, no one has announced participation but it would seem likely that 3rd party vendors will be in a position to provide this information along with the other services they offer.

## **BUT SERIOUSLY, WHY DO I WANT THIS INFORMATION?**

Let's take a hypothetical scenario of a motor carrier – for this purpose we'll refer to them as Billy Bob's Trucking Heaven LLC. Proprietor Billy Bob has a history of being the truck driver's best friend, or so he and the drivers think. Hours of service are not a high priority at Billy Bob's – if you run out of hours on your current log book, 'lose' it and start another. If you have a long way to go and a short time to get there, just press harder on the foot feed, because Billy Bob's trucks run 85 and you can really chew up the miles at that rate! Billy Bob's drivers love him because Billy Bob's seems to be a 'no rules' sort of company. UNTIL the DOT begins an investigation of Billy Bob's business practices. And as one might expect, Billy Bob is soon out of business and his drivers are all on the streets seeking their next trucking adventure. They soon begin to see the error of their ways since RESPONSIBLE motor carriers WILL NOT hire drivers with numerous violations of federal and state regulations on their PSP report. Responsible motor carriers understand that hiring drivers with repeated stops for speeding and log book violations will do nothing but damage their good standing under the SMS system because of continued violations by the 'veterans of Billy Bob's'.

## **WHAT IF?**

As the old saying goes, "Past performance is an indicator of future performance". What if you hired a driver and did not take advantage of the information that is available on PSP? What if that driver was involved in a serious at-fault accident? What if the claimants in that accident hired an attorney? What if that attorney discovered that you had not taken advantage of a program that was available to assist you in making solid hiring decisions? That attorney will have no qualms whatsoever about accessing your roadside inspection violation history in the Safety Measurement System in an attempt to use any DOT violations against your company; you can bet that your hiring practices (or lack thereof) will be fair game as well.

No responsible motor carrier wants to hire drivers with a record of irresponsible vehicular operation in the world of 2012. And, PSP allows a motor carrier to make a much more informed decision when hiring, which will result in a higher quality driver who operates equipment safely and lawfully.

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