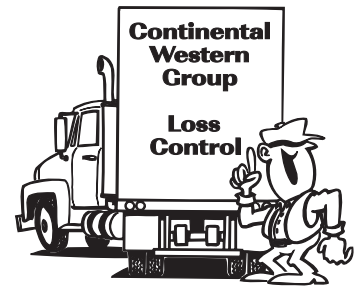


TRUCK TALK

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Maintenance Records

Part 396 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations deals with the inspection, repair, and maintenance of commercial motor vehicles. There are 3 main parts of this regulation which play a very important role in the efficient operation of a trucking company:

- 396.3(a) General – Every motor carrier **shall** systematically inspect, repair, and maintain, or cause to be systematically inspected, repaired, and maintained, all motor vehicles subject to its control.
- 396.11 Report required – Every motor carrier **shall** require its drivers to report, and every driver shall prepare a report in writing at the completion of each day's work on each vehicle operated.
- 396.17 Periodic inspection – Every commercial motor vehicle **shall** be inspected as required by this section.

You will notice that each of these 3 parts of this regulation have one word in common – **shall**. It does not say, should, could, or must, it says **shall**. So, now that you know that you **shall** do this, let's discuss some reasons why good, detailed maintenance records are important to the operation of your trucking company.

- As you are well aware by now, one of the BASICS in CSA 2010 is Vehicle Maintenance. There are approximately 255 vehicle maintenance regulations with which motor carriers and their drivers must comply, and every one of them has a severity and time weighting that will have an impact on your CSA 2010 score.
- The cost of operating a fleet of motor vehicles is not likely to decrease any time soon. Vehicles, parts, and fuel prices continue to go up. Qualified mechanics are harder and harder to find, and government regulations continue to impact the transportation industry. Comprehensive, up-to-date written maintenance records help you manage

your fleet costs and allow you to remain competitive in today's market. You have 2 choices when it comes to maintenance. You can be proactive and control your non-productive time through preventative maintenance, or you be reactive and deal with whatever comes along on a daily basis. The choice, I believe, is pretty clear which is the best option.

- Failure to comply with regulations relating to the inspection, repair, and maintenance of your vehicles (and the record-keeping that goes along with it), indicates to an investigator that there may be other areas of non-compliance as well.
- By reviewing your maintenance records, you may be able to see gaps in your current maintenance program. For example, replacing 8 water pumps on 8 separate vehicles that have between 300,000 and 350,000 miles might indicate that water pumps need to be replaced prior to 300,000 miles. It is faster and much more economical to do the work in your own shop rather than on the road.
- Since maintenance of vehicles and the associated record-keeping requirements are part of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, legal issues are sure to arise should these tasks not be performed properly. If your truck and/or trailer is involved in a serious accident and your maintenance records are subpoenaed (and they **will** be), will your records be able to prove that regular preventative maintenance has been performed?

A comprehensive maintenance program conducted by a competent, professional staff of mechanics is essential a safe and compliant motor carrier. New legislation, technological improvements, and more efficient methods of managing risk all increase the importance of maintaining good maintenance records. Ask yourself "If I were buying this piece of used equipment, would the maintenance records that come with it be good enough to make me comfortable with my purchase"?

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