



A CSA BASIC PRIMER

The contents of this Primer are derived from material developed by or made available by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

What is CSA?

CSA, which stands for “Compliance-Safety-Accountability”, is the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA’s) safety compliance and enforcement program, which holds motor carriers and drivers accountable for their safety on our Nation’s roads.

CSA affects carriers subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, carriers transporting passengers or cargo in interstate commerce, and Hazardous Materials carriers operating in intrastate commerce. CSA may also impact carriers whose State requires that they obtain a U.S. DOT Number.

CSA consists of three key components:

1. The Safety Measurement System (SMS) is FMCSA’s system for identifying unsafe carriers that should receive interventions. The SMS allows FMCSA, law enforcement, and motor carriers to see a comprehensive profile of safety issues. The SMS automatically identifies carriers that pose the greatest safety risk so that resources can be prioritized. Review the [SMS Methodology](#) to learn more about the SMS.
2. The safety interventions include tools to more efficiently and effectively bring carriers into compliance.
3. The proposed Safety Fitness Determination (SFD) regulations would replace the current three-tiered safety rating process with a single unfit determination, using on-road safety performance data and/or investigation results to assess the safety fitness of more carriers every month. FMCSA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the SFD in January 2016.

What is BASIC?

The Safety Measurement System (SMS) is the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s (FMCSA) workload prioritization tool. The SMS is designed to incorporate the safety-based regulations related to motor carrier operations. The SMS assesses compliance and prioritizes carriers for interventions based on their on-road performance and investigation results. On-road performance includes data collected from roadside inspections and crash reports; investigation results include violations discovered within the previous 12 months.

The SMS assesses motor carrier on-road performance and compliance by organizing data into seven Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICs): Unsafe Driving, Crash

Indicator, Hours-of-Service Compliance, Vehicle Maintenance, Controlled Substances/Alcohol, Hazardous Materials Compliance (HM), and Driver Fitness.¹

In each BASIC, the SMS calculates a quantifiable measure of a motor carrier's performance. The SMS groups carriers by BASIC with other carriers that have a similar number of safety events (e.g., crashes, inspections, or violations). The SMS then ranks these carriers based on their BASIC measure, assigning them a percentile from 0–100 (the higher the percentile, the worse the safety performance).

The BASICs incorporate violations of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) and the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMRs), and are organized to focus on behaviors that may cause or increase the severity of crashes. The BASICs are defined as follows:

- **Unsafe Driving BASIC**—Operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in a dangerous or careless manner. *Example violations include: speeding, reckless driving, improper lane change, texting while operating a CMV, not wearing safety belts.*
- **Crash Indicator BASIC** (not publicly available)—Historical pattern of crash involvement, including frequency and severity. This BASIC is based on information from State-reported crashes that meet reportable crash standards. All reportable crashes are used regardless of the carrier's or driver's role in the crash. This BASIC uses crash history that is not specifically a behavior but instead the consequence of a behavior or a set of behaviors.
- **HOS Compliance BASIC**—Operation of CMVs by drivers who are ill, fatigued, or in noncompliance with the HOS regulations. This BASIC includes violations of regulations pertaining to records of duty status (RODS) as they relate to HOS requirements and the management of CMV driver fatigue. *Example violations include: operating a CMV while ill or fatigued, requiring or permitting a property-carrying CMV driver to drive more than 11 hours, failing to preserve RODS for 6 months/failing to preserve supporting documents.*
- **Vehicle Maintenance BASIC**—Failure to properly maintain a CMV and prevent shifting loads, spilled or dropped cargo, and overloading of a CMV. *Example violations include: inoperative brakes, lights, and other mechanical defects, improper load securement, failure to make required repairs.*
- **Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC**—Operation of CMVs by drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, illegal drugs, and misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications. *Example violations include: use or possession of controlled substances or alcohol, failing to implement an alcohol and/or controlled substance testing program.*
- **HM Compliance BASIC** (not publicly available)—Unsafe handling of HM on a CMV. *Example violations include: failing to mark, label, or placard in accordance with the regulations, not properly securing a package containing HM, leaking containers, failing to conduct a test or inspection on a cargo tank when required by the United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT).*
- **Driver Fitness BASIC**—Operation of CMVs by drivers who are unfit to operate a CMV due to lack of training, experience, or medical qualifications. *Example violations include: failing to have a valid and appropriate commercial driver's license (CDL), being medically unqualified to operate a CMV, failing to maintain driver qualification files.*

¹ Find Fact Sheets for each BASIC here: https://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov/Help_Center_Resources.aspx?locationid=58.

In addition to the seven BASICS, there is an Insurance/Other Indicator used for prioritization that incorporates violations found during investigations. The Insurance/Other Indicator is defined as follows:

- **Insurance/Other Indicator (not publicly available)**—Failure to comply with registration, insurance, or other reporting requirements. *Example violations include: operating a CMV without the minimum level of financial responsibility, failing to maintain copies of crash reports.*

Unsafe Driving BASIC

What is the Unsafe Driving BASIC? The Unsafe Driving BASIC addresses the requirements within the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), specifically 49 CFR Parts 392, Driving of Commercial Motor Vehicles, and 397, Transportation of Hazardous Materials; Driving and Parking Rules, and refers to the operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) by drivers in a dangerous or careless manner. Some example roadside safety violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include speeding, reckless driving, improper lane change, and inattention.

A table of all Unsafe Driving BASIC violations may be found in the Appendix.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: driver training certificates and written route plans for certain explosives. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to assess the nature and severity of safety problems.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Unsafe Driving BASIC? Motor carriers should be aware of all requirements included in the regulations related to the Unsafe Driving BASIC. Unsafe driving includes both obvious, and more subtle, behaviors. For example, regulations associated with this BASIC require drivers to wear seatbelts, to follow traffic laws, and to abide by speed limits. The Unsafe Driving BASIC is based on the regulations that require CMV drivers to drive in accordance with the laws, ordinances, and regulations in a jurisdiction and with the FMCSRs at 49 CFR Part 392 – Driving of Motor Vehicles and Part 397 – Transportation of Hazardous Materials.

Motor carriers should identify patterns of noncompliance in their drivers to educate them on the regulations and the importance compliance. They should answer drivers' questions, and direct them to the information they need, which can be found on FMCSA's Websites.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the Unsafe Driving BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/or inspections with no Unsafe Driving violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.

Crash Indicator BASIC

What is the Crash Indicator BASIC? At present, the Crash Indicator BASIC can only be seen by enforcement personnel or by a motor carrier that is logged into its own safety profile; it is not publically available. FMCSA defines the Crash Indicator BASIC as histories or patterns of high crash involvement, such as frequency and severity. It is based on information from State-reported crashes that meet reportable crash standards. The Crash Indicator BASIC uses crash history that is not specifically a behavior but instead the consequence of a behavior or set of behaviors. The consequence of a behavior(s) can point to a problem that needs attention. State-reported crashes raise the percentile rank of the Crash Indicator, which indicates lower safety compliance. FMCSA's Safety Measurement System (SMS) does not currently factor in crash accountability; the agency is researching how this may be incorporated in the future.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: carrier data from their Accident Register and accident reports required by State or other governmental entities/insurers (for example, Police Accident Reports). Motor carriers should keep documents required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), and know that SIs may use them to assess the nature and severity of safety problems.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Crash Indicator BASIC? Motor carriers and drivers should know that their State-reported crash history matters. Their safety performance will be assessed based on how many crashes they've been involved in, when they happened, and how severe they were. Drivers need to understand how to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) safely in order to avoid crashes.

Motor carriers should know how to comply with the FMCSRs and improve their percentile rank in the Crash Indicator BASIC. Carriers should provide up-to-date mileage figures on their MCS-150 biennial updates, which are used in the Crash Indicator calculation. They should also educate their drivers about safe driving practices, ensure their drivers know and understand safety regulations, and help them to understand what they can do to prevent crashes. Ultimately, more knowledgeable and law-abiding drivers will lead to fewer crashes and fewer crashes mean safer roads.

Motor carriers should know crashes adversely affect SMS results for 24 months and that only not having crashes will improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.

Driver Fitness BASIC

What is the Driver Fitness BASIC? The Driver Fitness BASIC addresses the requirements within the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), specifically 49 CFR Parts 383, Commercial Driver's License Standards; Requirements and Penalties, and 391, Qualifications of Drivers and Longer Combination Vehicle (LCV) Driver Instructors, and refers to the operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) by drivers who are unfit to operate a CMV due to a lack of training, experience, or medical qualifications. Some examples of roadside safety violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include failure to have a valid and appropriate commercial driver's license (CDL) and being medically unqualified to operate a CMV.

A table of all Driver Fitness BASIC violations may be found in the Appendix. **What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep?** If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: complete driver qualification files including medical certificates, State driving records, annual reviews of driving records, and employment applications. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to assess the nature and severity of safety problems.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Driver Fitness BASIC? The Driver Fitness BASIC is based on the regulations that require CMV drivers to be physically and medically qualified to drive a CMV according to Subpart E of FMCSR Part 391. For example, if a driver is operating with an expired medical certificate, then he or she is not complying with the Driver Fitness BASIC.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the Driver Fitness BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/ or inspections with no Driver Fitness violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.

HOS Compliance BASIC

What is the HOS Compliance BASIC? Specifically, the HOS Compliance BASIC addresses the requirements within the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) at 49 CFR Parts 392, Driving of Commercial Motor Vehicles, and 395, Hours of Service of Drivers. This BASIC includes violations of the regulations pertaining to records of duty status (RODS) as they relate to HOS requirements and the management of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver fatigue. Some example roadside safety violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include a driver operating more hours than allowed under HOS regulations and falsification of RODS.

A table of all HOS Compliance BASIC violations may be found in the Appendix.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: RODS and supporting documents such as bills of lading, carrier pros, freight bills, dispatch records, electronic mobile communication/tracking records, gate record receipts, weigh/scale tickets, and fuel receipts. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to assess the nature and severity of safety problems.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the HOS Compliance BASIC? The HOS Compliance BASIC is based on the regulations that require CMV drivers to follow the HOS requirements in the FMCSRs at 49 CFR Part 395 and Part 392 – Driving of Commercial Motor Vehicles. For example, if a driver operates a CMV and falsifies his or her RODS to conceal hours driven, then he or she is not complying with the HOS Compliance BASIC.

Drivers should understand the importance of keeping their RODS current, accurate, and complete. Employers should ensure that their drivers know how many hours they can legally drive before they break HOS rules, and understand how lack of sleep negatively affects their ability to drive safely.

Motor carriers should identify patterns of noncompliance in their drivers and educate them on the regulations and the importance of compliance. Motor carriers should be aware of how long their drivers have been operating on the road and ensure that safety is the top consideration when assigning work to them. Motor carriers should answer drivers' questions and direct them to the information they need, including FMCSA's Websites.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the HOS Compliance BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/or inspections with no HOS Compliance violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.

Vehicle Maintenance BASIC

What is the Vehicle Maintenance BASIC? The Vehicle Maintenance BASIC addresses the requirements within the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), specifically 49 CFR Parts 392, Driving of Commercial Motor Vehicles, 393, Parts and Accessories Necessary for Safe Operation, and 396, Inspection, Repair, and Maintenance, to properly maintain a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) and to prevent shifting loads, spilled or dropped cargo, and overloading of a CMV. Proper maintenance includes, among other things, ensuring that lamps and reflectors are working, and tires are not worn. Some example roadside safety violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include operating an out-of-service vehicle or operating a vehicle with inoperative brakes, lights, and/or other mechanical defects, and failure to make required repairs. Improper load securement (see the specific requirements by commodity type in 49 CFR Part 393.116 – 393.136) and cargo retention violations are also examples of roadside violations included in this BASIC.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: roadside inspection reports, vehicle maintenance files, annual vehicle inspection reports, Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIRs), equipment repair receipts, evidence of driver training on load securement, and accident reports. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to assess the nature and severity of safety problems.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Vehicle Maintenance BASIC? Drivers should know how to properly maintain CMVs, for their safety and the safety of others. Employers should ensure that their drivers know that any vehicle malfunction, maintenance problem, or load securement issue must be addressed proactively to prevent crashes.

Motor carriers should educate drivers about how to properly conduct pre- and post-trip inspections, record vehicle defects on DVIRs, and ensure that any defects which would hinder safe operation of the vehicle are repaired prior to operating the vehicle. Motor carriers should train drivers on how to properly load CMVs to prevent shifting loads, spilled or dropped cargo, and overloading. Motor carriers should answer drivers' questions, and direct them to the information they need, including FMCSA's Websites.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the Vehicle Maintenance BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/or inspections with no Vehicle Maintenance violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.

A table of all Vehicle Maintenance BASIC violations may be found in the Appendix.

Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC

What is the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC? The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC addresses the requirements in Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), specifically 49 CFR Parts 382, Controlled Substances and Alcohol Use and Testing, and 392, Driving of Commercial Motor Vehicles. The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC deals with the operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) by drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications. Some example roadside violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include a driver(s) failing an alcohol test, which indicates an alcohol level of .02 or greater, and operating under the influence of illegal drugs.

A table of all Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC violations may be found in the Appendix.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: records of verified positive controlled substances test results, documentation of refusals to take required alcohol and/or controlled substances tests, and driver evaluations and referrals. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to help determine whether the motor carrier has any safety performance issues.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC?

Drivers should understand the regulations related to the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC and how to comply with them. The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC is based on the regulations that require motor carriers to implement a controlled substance/alcohol testing program in accordance with 49 CFR Part 382, Controlled Substances and Alcohol Use and Testing. Employers should ensure that drivers understand that staying drug-free and alcohol-free while driving for their motor carriers is not just important for safety – it's the law.

Motor carriers should educate their drivers about how to comply with the FMCSRs and how it impacts the carrier's percentile rank in the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC. Motor carriers

should know they are accountable for the safety performance of their drivers and are responsible for educating their drivers about the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/or clean inspections with no Controlled Substances/Alcohol violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.