

day. This is something freight forwarders must take into consideration when planning and quoting a job for transport.

One method used by 3PL companies to choose carriers is by looking at CSA scores. CSA stands for compliance, safety, and accountability, and it is an initiative that was introduced by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to improve the overall safety of commercial motor vehicles. Launched in December 2010, it is a safety enforcement program based on carrier performance and driven by the data collected on them. The CSA program is meant to allow the FMCSA to put a more intense focus on companies that pose the highest safety risks on the roads. The ultimate goal of the CSA program is to make the roads safer for both carriers and the public. To achieve this, both motor carriers and drivers are held accountable for their role in safety.

So how are CSA scores calculated? A company's safety data is collected from roadside inspections, crash reports, investigation results, and registration details. All this data is then made available on the FMCSA's Safety Management System (SMS) website, which is updated on a monthly basis.

The SMS takes into consideration the amount, severity, and date of any violations, inspections, or crashes a carrier has been involved in. There is more weight given to violations that are more recent, and after two years violations are removed from the record. Also, crashes are weighted based on severity, so a crash involving a fatality or injury has more impact on a score than one that just required a tow. SMS also uses the following indicators to prioritize high-risk carriers:

- Unsafe driving: dangerous or careless operation of a vehicle including unsafe driving practices like speeding, improper lane changes, and failure to wear a seat belt.
- Crash indicator: history of crash involvement based on state-reported crashes.

- Hours of service (HOS) compliance: incidents of vehicle operation by drivers who are ill, fatigued, or in noncompliance with HOS regulations, including driver log violations.
- Vehicle maintenance: mechanical defects and failure to make required repairs as well as improper load securing.
- Controlled substance/alcohol: impaired driving through the use of alcohol and illegal drugs and misuse of over-the-counter and prescription drugs.
- Hazardous materials compliance: unsafe or incorrect handling of hazardous materials including leaking containers, improper placarding, and missing shipping papers.
- Driver fitness: vehicles operated by drivers who are unfit due to lack of training, experience, or medical conditions.

Having good CSA scores reduces overall involvement with the DOT, allowing carriers to get on with their day-to-day operations. By keeping good scores, they can greatly reduce fines and expect a lot less frequent or time-consuming roadside inspections.

References

1. DOT, PHMSA Hazmat Intelligence Portal, <https://hip.phmsa.dot.gov/analyticsSOAP/saw.dll?Dashboard>, (2016). ■



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