

Keeping Your Hours of Service BASIC Scores Low

The Hours of Service (HOS) Compliance Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Category (BASIC) is one of seven categories that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) uses to determine how a motor carrier ranks relative to other carriers in its Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) initiative. This BASIC includes violations of HOS requirements and the management of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver fatigue. Examples of roadside safety violations include operating more hours than allowed under HOS regulations and falsification of record of duty status (RODS).

The BASIC Basics

A carrier's measurement for each BASIC depends on the following:

- The number of adverse safety events (violations related to that BASIC or crashes)
- The severity of violations or crashes
- When the adverse safety events occurred (more recent events are weighted more heavily)

All roadside inspection violations that pertain to a BASIC are assigned a severity weight that reflects its association with crash occurrence and crash consequences. The violation severity weights are assigned on a 1 to 10 scale, where 1 represents the lowest crash risk and 10 represents the highest crash risk relative to the other violations in the BASIC. For example, in the HOS BASIC, violating HOS regulations is assigned a value of 7, operating a truck while impaired by fatigue is a 10 and a

RODS violation is worth 1.

Keeping Scores Low

There are major benefits to keeping your HOS BASIC scores low. Not only does it help keep your fleet on the road as much as possible, low scores mean fewer accidents and safer drivers, as well as lower insurance costs. Here are some tips to keep those scores as low as possible:

- Computerize driver logs; drivers who maintain their logs on a computer are much more likely to keep an accurate log. Since HOS violations are among the most common CSA violations, this is a vital way to lower scores.

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- Teach drivers the importance of keeping their RODS current, accurate and complete. Drivers who understand HOS regulations avoid fines and decrease the chance of fatigue.
- Provide annual driver fatigue training. Encourage healthy eating habits and avoiding medications that

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cause drowsiness. Make sure drivers are aware that smoking, turning up the radio and drinking coffee are not real cures for fatigue.

- Keep lines of communication open. Let your drivers know they are free to ask about regulations or alert you of high fatigue levels.
- Strive for clean inspections; drivers need to know that daily inspections are vitally important and should be taken seriously. Encourage drivers to spend off-duty time inspecting their rigs. Maintenance is also key—a truck out of service doesn't make you or the driver any money, and a well-maintained vehicle will do better in roadside inspections.
- Do not tolerate drivers who rack up high scores and refuse to change their ways. CSA is not going anywhere—it's in your best interest to hire drivers that buy in to the system and practice safety.
- Set goals, but remember that it is the entire company's responsibility to work towards them. Goals should be specific and attainable. For example, saying you want to "eliminate all violations by this time next year" is very specific but probably unattainable. Instead, "lowering our HOS BASIC by xx% through increased training by this time next year" is a better goal.
- Offer incentives for clean inspections. Let drivers know you appreciate their efforts by rewarding them after clean inspections.
- If there is an erroneous violation on a driver's record, appeal it. Make sure you have a good basis for the appeal and there is a good chance it can be expunged from the record. Use the DataQs system to appeal.

How Do You Measure Up?

FMCSA's Safety Measurement System (SMS) determines

an overall BASIC status for each motor carrier based upon roadside inspection results that are reflected as a percentile rank and/or prior investigation violations. You and your drivers can check scores by visiting the SMS website at <https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/sms/>.

Don't be afraid to flaunt low scores. You have a better chance of partnering with a prospective carrier if they know your fleet takes CSA seriously. For more information on how CSA affects your bottom line, contact Leverity Insurance Group, Inc. today.