

Keeping Your Vehicle Maintenance BASIC Scores Low

The Vehicle Maintenance 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 relating to properly maintaining 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. Examples of roadside safety violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include operating an out-of-service (OOS) vehicle or operating a vehicle with inoperative brakes, lights and/or other mechanical defects and failure to make required repairs. Improper load securement and cargo retention violations are also examples of roadside violations included in this BASIC.

The Vehicle Maintenance 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 Vehicle Maintenance BASIC, failure to conduct a pre-trip inspection is assigned a weight of 4, failing to secure cargo is assigned a weight of 1 and operating an OOS vehicle is assigned a weight of 10.

Vehicle Maintenance BASIC scores can be the most difficult to improve because of the sheer number of potential violations, not to mention how easy some of them are to spot.

Keeping Scores Low

There are major benefits to keeping your Vehicle Maintenance BASIC scores low. Not only does it help keep your fleet on the road as much as possible, lower 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:

- Address the importance of thorough daily inspections. Encourage drivers to spend off-duty

Provided by Leverity Insurance Group, Inc.

Keeping Your Vehicle Maintenance BASIC Scores Low

time inspecting their rigs' safety features, such as mirrors, headlights and taillights, turn signals and brake lights. Maintenance is also key—tell your drivers to work as quickly as possible to fix any problems with the safety features.

- Develop a system of preventive maintenance for compliant, safe and efficient fleet operations; this include a schedule for periodic maintenance, inspection and recordkeeping. This system should be attuned to manufacturer recommendations, your own experience and regulatory requirements.
- Develop procedures to ensure that management is notified of vehicle defects by using Driver Vehicle Inspection Records (DVIRs) and other communication channels, such as driver call-in and email from mechanics.
- Ensure drivers are qualified to complete thorough and timely DVIRs by the end of the day of the trip and prior to their next assignment. Drivers should submit copies of all roadside inspections to carrier management within 24 hours.
- Develop a written and progressive disciplinary policy focused on taking corrective action to ensure drivers comply with regulations and policies. A progressive disciplinary policy could include, among other things, written warnings, suspensions or work restrictions, monetary penalties, and termination. This policy should also specify consequences for any carrier official who knowingly and willfully allows vehicle maintenance violations.
- Do not tolerate drivers who don't take vehicle inspections seriously. There are a lot of moving parts on a truck and every driver needs to do his or her part to ensure they all work properly.
- Offer incentives for clean DVIRs; for example, offer gift cards or cash bonuses to drivers for a clean Level 1 inspection report.

- If there is an erroneous violation on a driver's record, appeal it. If you have a good basis for the appeal—such as GPS records of the driver's speed at the time of a speeding ticket—there is a good chance it can be expunged from the record.

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/>.

For more information on how CSA affects your bottom line, contact Levery Insurance Group, Inc. today.