



CSA SUCCESS: VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

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The Compliance, Safety and Accountability (CSA) system from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is now a way of life for all motor carriers and professional drivers.

CSA scores are requested and checked, even though they are no longer publicly available. These scores must be monitored and managed to remain below ALERT level to maintain a favorable status with customers and the insurance community. The FMCSA also monitors these scores to prioritize motor carriers for interventions, a.k.a. audits.

The key to success in ANY of the CSA BASICs is to avoid getting violations on roadside and scale inspections.

In the Vehicle Maintenance BASIC, the most common violations we see involve lights, tires and brakes. This is due to two main reasons: they are the most visible or “observable” defect and they get the most “wear and tear” on a vehicle as it is driven.

The pre- and post-trip inspections, coupled with compliant vehicle maintenance records, are key processes to have a successful vehicle maintenance program. The FMCSA regulations state that Independent Contractor (IC) units under lease to the motor carrier are the responsibility of the motor carrier.

There are different methods of compliance in the case of ICs. The motor carrier can call for extra inspections at shops more frequently than the required federal annual inspection. A monthly maintenance summary showing what was done to the IC’s unit and when services are planned is another. The key point is that once the lease is signed, the motor carrier needs to do something to assure the vehicle is safe and in compliance with the FMCSA regulations.

A very simple but effective technique to control CSA scores is to LOOK at the trucks. You don’t have to be a mechanic and only need to be familiar with the key items that are bringing points to your CSA scores. Emphasis on tires, lights and brakes will help in the goal of having safe trucks on the highway and controlling CSA scores.

It comes down to finding the defects and correcting them before they are found in a roadside or scale inspection. In addition to the points the violations bring to CSA, it creates downtime while the item is repaired, which costs everyone efficiency and money.

Remind your drivers regularly that inspections must be completed, including doing a walk-around every time the truck stops for ANY reason.

We all know that freight must be delivered to stay in business, but the goal is to perform this service safely, in compliance and on time.



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