



ROADCHECK 2020

September 2020

CSA (Compliance, Safety and Accountability), the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration compliance monitoring program, has been in operation for several years now.

An event that has potential for a significant impact on your CSA scores is scheduled for September 9-11, 2020. This nationwide roadside and scale inspection event is called **Roadcheck 2020**.

This event will bring increased numbers of commercial vehicle inspectors and inspections. This presents an opportunity to produce **NO VIOLATION** inspections to enhance your CSA BASIC (Behavioral Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories) scores.

A significant fact to share is the value of a No Violation inspection in CSA. Each inspection without violations improves time weight total by 3 points. Avoid adding points to the top line of the CSA formula is also critical in maintaining or improving your scores.

Cover these issues with your drivers regularly to prepare for Roadcheck:

- The goal **MUST** be to get **NO VIOLATIONS** on inspections. CSA monitors and scores ALL violations.

- **Pre-trip** truck, trailer, cargo (especially flatbeds) and driver logs and credentials. **Correct** issues before starting the trip.
- **Emphasize inspections during the trip.** Equipment fails and things break. Correction, even though on the road, is critical. This makes the detailed pre-trip inspection even more important to save money from road repairs by finding the defects and correcting them before the trip.
- Driver requirements will be this year's focus of the event.
- **Seat belts** carry a 7-point severity score in CSA. They must be worn, and enforcement **WILL** be checking aggressively.
- Drivers with patterns of roadside and scale violations should be given **extra coaching and attention** in preparation for the Roadcheck event.

No violation inspections should be a focus of your company's CSA culture and education efforts all year. Roadcheck gives all motor carriers a chance to enhance their scores during this annual inspection event.

Remember, help your drivers focus on detailed pre-trip inspections with the goal of No Violation inspections.



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A CMV PASSENGER POLICY

September 2020

It is often mentioned that the road for a commercial truck driver is solitary. Hour after hour, day after day, many drivers spend their time driving across our country alone. However, there are companies that allow CMV drivers to include a passenger. Even last month we stated that the role of a professional driver is to prevent accidents. Therefore, if you are considering adding a passenger into the vehicle's cab, there are some important items to consider.

A CMV Passenger Policy

The purpose of the passenger policy is to establish how your company will deal with passengers riding in commercial motor vehicles. The policy is in place to reduce the exposure of passengers, drivers and the registered motor carrier to potential risks, thus lessening the liability of all parties. The policy also establishes motor carrier and driver responsibilities for keeping passengers safe and gives each a set of guidelines on how to achieve this goal. Lastly, the policy must apply to all drivers under authority.

CMV Driver Responsibilities

In order to transport a passenger, the driver must have the specific qualifications, i.e. driver has worked at the company for at least 90 days, driver is accident-free for the last two years, driver has received no more than two moving violations in the past three years, etc.

Secondly, the driver understands there is an approval process for each request. They must receive written authorization to carry a passenger. That authorization must include the name of the passenger, the beginning and end points of transportation and the date when the authorization expires.

Though there are some important expectations on the passenger, their actions are a reflection on the driver, and this should be made clear. Accountability is key.

Motor Carrier Responsibilities

To ensure the health and safety of all drivers and potential passengers, the motor carrier should review all requests for passenger authorization, to assess any liability the driver, passenger or type of trip presents. In those situations where the company's risk may be too great, authorization may be denied.

The motor carrier must enforce the above employee guidelines to ensure that passengers are not being unnecessarily exposed to hazards and that the business does not assume avoidable risks. Accountability is two ways, as the motor carrier needs to make sure all drivers are aware of the guidelines for transporting passengers in company vehicles.

Finally, the motor carrier needs to manage all written authorizations to ensure compliance with federal regulation.

Exceptions

There are limited situations in which the terms of the policy do not apply. For example, written authorization to carry a passenger is typically not necessary when transporting employees or other persons authorized by the motor carrier to drive company vehicles as well as when aid is being given in case of an accident or emergency. It should always be expected that drivers take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of themselves and their passengers.

Insurance Coverage Exists

There are insurance companies who can provide policies that cover passengers while in the CMV. You should consult with your insurance consultant or agent on which policy will work best for your exposures, program, and operation. All are factors in rates and premiums.



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PREDICTIVE DRIVING

July 2020

As a professional driver, defensive driving is a topic that is common in most safety programs. There are commercial programs available for purchase. Many motor carriers even write their own, both of which are great.

A different approach to defensive driving is called Predictive Driving.” The skill which any professional driver, or ANY driver for that matter, must develop to be a good defensive driver and avoid crashes is figuring out what the cars and trucks around them might do. This is “predictive driving.” They must essentially predict the future and have positive responses and actions ready to prevent a crash IF the other driver does what they predicted.

It’s not an easy thing to do and it is a skill that must be practiced and perfected. Drivers must be FULLY engaged in the process of driving to be an effective predictive driver. ALL distractions must be avoided that can reduce complete attention to the driving environment.

To make these predictions, you must mentally or verbally describe the actions and possible negative outcomes of every vehicle around your vehicle. An example of a prediction is:

A vehicle is speeding up and slowing down or not holding steady in their lane. This would lead most drivers to “predict” that the other vehicle was using their smartphone. A valid response to this prediction would be to slow down and get away from the vehicle to avoid a crash.

Most drivers who have earned million-mile or more safe driving recognition are usually the best predictive drivers. It takes work, and if you ask any million-mile driver, they will tell you it is not easy and requires focus and dedication to the “craft” of being a professional driver.

Think about your predictive driving skill level. Every driver and vehicle we share the road with has the potential to affect you and the vehicles around you.

A predictive driver has to have a “negative” outlook, as most of the predictions revolve around things other drivers may do wrong that could cause a crash. We should live our lives as positively as we can, but to be a good predictive driver, we must ALWAYS be prepared for the worst thing that can happen around the vehicle.

This approach to safe driving and avoiding crashes will have you constantly prepared to deal with whatever happens around the vehicle. If it doesn’t, that’s okay, but if it does, you can help avoid a crash.

Being a predictive driver is the right thing to do and will help you maintain your safe driving record.



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CONSTRUCTION ZONE SAFETY

June 2020

Warm weather means construction zones will start “popping” up all over the nation. As our roads and bridges age, they need repair and replacement, creating the need for workers to re-direct traffic as they do their work.

A primary concern in construction zones is, of course, the safety of the men and women working on our roads and bridges. To keep them safe and to avoid crashes we must be extra cautious in construction areas.

Some tips to share with your staff and drivers include:

- **SLOW DOWN** – this is a core safety value in ANY situation where there is a higher risk of a crash. Slowing down creates more space. The extra space yields more time to respond to the ever-changing circumstances.
- **Pay attention** – construction zones and the lower speeds, usually 45mph, are NOT the time to do other things. Even though many “regular drivers” can be seen checking their phones, this is a violation of FMCSA regulations for professional drivers. This should NOT be done at any time, especially NOT in construction zones.
- **Be patient** – this is a key behavior for a professional driver. We must exercise extra patience to allow for other drivers who may not be able to do this.

- **Obey the signs** - a construction zone is designed and planned by traffic engineers. They examine lines of sight, distances and many other factors to place the signs for a work zone. They are designed to protect the workers and make the delay as short as possible.
- **Drive defensively** - don't follow too closely. Be alert and expect things to change. For example, the operator of a piece of equipment may not know that the back of the machine is just over the line out into the lane of travel. Be prepared to make adjustments.
- **Lane pattern changes** – many construction zones have a lane shift that moves all traffic to the opposite side of the highway. This is most often found when bridges are being replaced or rebuilt. These lane shifts can be abrupt, especially for a high profile vehicle. Reduce speed even more and be certain the trailer does not track outside the lane of travel.
- **Solid white lines** – everyone who has driven through a construction zone knows these solid white lines mean –STAY IN YOUR LANE. Please follow this traffic regulation even if you see other vehicles crossing them.

A construction zone is a place for a professional driver to set an example for other drivers. Help the workers improving our highways do their work and get home safely. Their safety is in YOUR hands.



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SPRING DRIVING CHALLENGES

May 2020

Professional Drivers know first-hand how difficult winter driving is. Spring weather is a welcome change in seasons, but brings some unique challenges.

Let's examine some of those challenges to help keep your drivers' safety focus and awareness strong:

- **Weather-Rain:** Spring can bring storms and heavy rain. Hydroplaning is one of the more obvious concerns associated with driving safely in the spring. Visibility is another issue to be aware of during a rainstorm, both for you and the motoring public we share the roads with.
 - Slow down to give yourself and the family in the car more time and space when around your truck,
- **Weather-Wind:** Spring storms also bring high winds. Large profile vehicles of any size must be aware and prepared for high winds, especially crosswinds. Be prepared when coming out from protected areas and be ready for other drivers in high profile vehicles to not hold their lanes well.
 - Turn your lights on during rainstorms. Give the motoring public extra space and reduce your speed to increase your decision time and safety.

- **Pedestrians:** Spring weather brings people out to enjoy the season. Be aware of joggers, bicyclists and kids playing on or near the highways you travel.
 - Professional drivers should always be aware of pedestrians, but give extra attention to them during the spring.
- **Motorcycles:** Many people are taking up riding motorcycles as a hobby. A large percentage of these riders are new to the sport and don't have the experience to be a "defensive" rider.
 - The best way you can help motorcyclists ride safely is to give them a large safety zone.
- **Construction Zones:** Spring brings increased activity in road repairs. Professional Drivers should set the example in these work zones by slowing down, staying in the correct lane and being prepared for actions of "regular" drivers.
 - Please use extra caution in construction areas.

Driving safely requires full and complete attention. Don't allow the spring weather to become a distraction.



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PUT THE PHONE DOWN – PLEASE!

April 2020

This is an open letter to ALL drivers. If you are a professional commercial driver, please share this with family, friends and anyone that will listen!

We have all seen the signs of what has become an epidemic in our nation of using a smart phone while driving. Professional drivers know that handheld devices are prohibited by FMCSA regulations, but we still see commercial vehicle drivers holding and talking on phones.

A headset is a MUST for ALL drivers, but especially so for drivers of commercial vehicles. Even though a headset or speaker phone is better, those who use hands-free devices know that it is STILL distracting, so **PUT THE PHONE DOWN, PLEASE.**

Texting

A study done by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows when a driver tries to read or respond to a text you take your attention away from the road for approximately five seconds. At 55 miles per hour, the vehicle will travel the length of a football field or 300 feet!

A lot can happen in five seconds or 300 feet. A rig with a 53-foot trailer will be around 72 feet long from bumper to bumper. Three hundred feet equals just over four tractor trailer lengths of space.

NO ONE, repeat, NO ONE has the mental or reaction capacity to react to things that may happen in these five seconds of distraction.

AGAIN, PUT THE PHONE DOWN –PLEASE!

If you use your phone or text while driving, you are placing yourself and your family at great risk. Often a more tragic outcome is the people you may hurt or kill when you attempt to use the phone or text.

Signs we notice from smart phone distracted drivers:

- Not holding a steady speed – constant slowing down and speeding up.
- Wandering in the lane, or even worse, straying out of a lane.
- Sitting at a traffic light long after it has turned green. There is NO “good” time to use your phone when behind the wheel.
- Nearly hitting someone in the rear in traffic. When this type of rear-end crash does happen, it is often at or near full speed and the results are devastating.
- Observing a driver looking down for long periods of time.
- Erratic braking.

This is a major problem on our highway's and it has a simple solution: PUT THE PHONE DOWN!



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CSA SUCCESS: VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

March 2020

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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WINTER SLIP AND FALL PREVENTION

February 2020

Winter weather conditions require a professional driver to be extra aware of working safely around the unit. There are many areas that require your attention and focus to drive and work safely. As a professional driver, you must be healthy and able to perform all functions of your work, including the non-driving task of delivering customers' freight.

Slips and falls are a leading cause of injury. Working around the truck presents many hazards regarding slips and falls. Some of those hazards and how you can prevent slip and fall injuries include:

Entering and Exiting the Truck

This is one of the most basic functions of driving a truck. Winter conditions can cause the steps to be snow or ice covered. The surface you will step down on can also be slick from snow or ice. The Three Points of Contact method is important to prevent slip and fall injuries. Always have three parts of your body (two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand) in solid contact with the approved steps and handholds. Take that last step down to the ground VERY carefully and test the surface condition before you release your hold on the truck.

Specialized Equipment

Flatbeds, tankers and dump trailers present different issues than dry vans and refrigerated trailers when it comes to slips and falls.

Flatbeds are the most challenging, especially in the winter, as you have to climb on and off the trailer during cargo securement and tarping. Dumps and tankers can require climbing to tarp, sweep or load and unload. The Three Point Stance becomes even more important as a focus point with specialized equipment.

Dropping and Hooking Trailers

This point is often not associated with slip and fall injury. Pulling the fifth wheel release or lowering and raising the landing gear is another cause of a slip and fall. If you are not properly positioned, your feet can slip and a fall will result. You must exercise EXTREME caution when performing this type of work during winter weather conditions.

Parking Lots and Stairs

Many slip and falls during the winter take place when you are walking to or from the truck stop or shipping office. Wear proper winter footwear (NO LEATHER SOLES), test each step and "shuffle" your feet when you are not sure of what the surface condition is under the snow. Do not hurry. Walk slowly and carefully. Use hand rails on stairs. Try to keep your hands free to help with your balance.

Dress Properly for the Weather

It is difficult to concentrate on working and walking safely around the truck if you are cold. Proper winter weather protective clothing can keep you warm and allow you to focus on not being injured.



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BEING A SAFE PERSON

January 2020

When you read this, it will be a new year – 2020. We will not address “resolutions” as we all know how those plans, more often than not, don’t work out. What we do want to talk about is your commitment to be safe. We know being “safe” is a pretty broad subject, but we believe ALL of us need to approach life with a “safety” attitude.

The primary audience of this newsletter is the professional driver, but a new year is a great time for all of us to examine our lives and how we live them with respect to being safe. The usual items we cover throughout the year need to be on the list, such as:

- Driving defensively to protect other drivers we share the road with
- Complying with the regulations and rules of our country to protect our license privileges, especially so for professional drivers who earn their living by way of having a license to drive in commerce
- Avoiding injury to be able to perform the duties of our work AND to be able to enjoy our home time and families
- Avoiding crashes, despite the actions or possible errors of other drivers
- Taking the time to be good “ambassadors” of the transportation community
- Trying to improve yourself and be a better person and professional driver
- Avoiding complacency, staying sharp and focusing on living and driving safely.

The real message is to invest time and effort towards being a good person. If you approach life and work with a good, safe attitude you will find your days are more fulfilling and less stressful.

To be a “safe person” you should take time to examine the areas noted above and ALL parts of your life. No one ever starts a day by anticipating they might have trouble, but a professional driver and safe person must be prepared for things that MIGHT not go well and make adjustments to help everyone be safe.

A professional driver takes on much more daily responsibility than a regular driver. We often hope that the regular drivers we service in the transportation industry will give the respect a professional driver needs and deserves to help us deliver the goods and services our nation needs to live comfortably and safely. Unfortunately, we see examples of how this doesn’t happen everyday out on the road.

Examine your commitment to be a “safe person” as we start a new year. Making the commitment to be safe will make your life easier and just might influence someone to improve their approach to being safe and help them accomplish whatever they choose in 2020.



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