

BASICS

Improving Driver Fitness and
Controlled Substances & Alcohol



You want to continue bypassing weigh stations, saving time and money. But you have Alerts in some BASICS and your ISS (Inspection Selection System) score is too high. It's time to take action.

WHERE DO YOU START?



What are BASICS and ISS?

As you've seen, the FMCSA has a language of its own, mostly expressed in acronyms. To understand how your company is evaluated by FMCSA, you must first understand its language.

BASICS (Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories) are areas of a company's safety and regulatory compliance. FMCSA compiles data in seven BASICS and compares the results of similar motor carriers. The result provides an individual motor carrier's overall CSA (Compliance, Safety and Accountability) safety percentile ranking. The seven BASICS are:

- Vehicle Maintenance
- Unsafe Driving
- Hours of Service Compliance
- Driver Fitness
- Controlled Substances & Alcohol
- Hazardous Materials Compliance
- Crash Indicator

Overwhelmingly, the BASICS data results from commercial vehicle enforcement inspections. Data comes from the number of truck inspections and the violations uncovered during those inspections. It also results from citations issued on the road, post-crash analysis and from FMCSA or state investigations of motor carriers. Therefore, good truck inspections are fundamental to good BASICS scores.

Truck inspections commonly occur at weigh stations and roadside inspection sites. But not every truck gets inspected. Why? Two factors: first impressions and ISS.

State enforcement agencies have broad discretion over which trucks to inspect. Often, the officer will make a decision based on their first impression of the truck and the driver.

- Visible mechanical problems will almost always get a truck pulled in for a thorough inspection. A torn mudflap or missing clearance light may not represent an immediate safety issue, but it can cause an inspector to wonder what else may be wrong with the truck.
- Reckless driver behavior is another trigger for immediate enforcement action. But even short of unsafe driving, law enforcement will notice the driver who, when approaching a weigh station or roadside site, appears to be scrambling to get his paperwork in order. You can be sure that truck will be pulled in and the driver's credentials, permits and bills of lading will receive a thorough review.



WHILE NOT A MANDATE, THE ISS SCORE IS THE SINGLE BEST INDICATOR OF THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A CARRIER MAY RECEIVE AN INSPECTION.

ISS is the Inspection Selection System, the numerical score FMCSA provides to agencies responsible for commercial motor vehicle compliance. Those agencies use ISS scores to determine which motor carriers they should prioritize for weigh station pull-in or roadside inspection. ISS scores range from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the better.

While not a mandate, the ISS score is the single best indicator of the likelihood of receiving an inspection. Not surprisingly, carriers must maintain a good ISS score to qualify for or to continue participating in a weigh station bypass program like PrePass. The good news is that a motor carrier's ISS score is within the carrier's control. It starts with doing well on the seven BASICS.

QUICK QUIZ

1. What does the "B" in BASICS stand for?
2. Where does FMCSA get most of its safety data?
3. True or False: FMCSA tells states which trucks must be inspected.

Reduce Inspections

- Clean trucks give a good first impression. Dirty trucks can raise a red flag for inspectors.
- In addition to safety and compliance repairs, pay attention to visible items like peeling decals, which may cause an inspector to conduct further inspection.
- Organize your paperwork and have it easily accessible. If you are disorganized, law enforcement may assume your maintenance is as well.

(Quick Quiz answers: 1) Behavior; 2) truck inspections; 3) False. FMCSA provides the ISS score, but states have broad discretion.)

How does FMCSA calculate the ISS score? What are Alerts?

The BASICs, CSA and ISS scores are all data-driven. The calculations FMCSA goes through can be complex – but there are four aspects of this process you should understand.

1

When determining a carrier's BASIC percentile, FMCSA applies a mathematical formula to a carrier's violations in the last 24 months. Violations that are more recent have greater impact in the equation, as do violations that are more severe. This is commonly referred to as Time and Severity weighting.

Having recent "clean" inspections will tip the scales in your favor as older inspections, those with violations, age out. Similarly, even minor violations can be an improvement over past problems, particularly those that placed a truck or driver out of service (OOS). Improvement in your scores may require close attention over several months, but you are not stuck in the past.

2

You do need enforcement inspections. Because inspections produce the data FMCSA uses to calculate ISS scores, FMCSA will prioritize for inspection those motor carriers who simply do not yet have enough inspections to generate a safety profile.

This is another opportunity to improve your scores. Reach out to your local state commercial vehicle enforcement agency and see whether they will conduct voluntary truck inspections. If not – they may be short on manpower – perhaps they do give demonstrations to motor carrier groups. You can learn directly from the inspectors themselves.

3

FMCSA applies an Alert symbol to a carrier's BASIC when the carrier's percentile is at or above the "Intervention Threshold" established for that category. It can also apply when the carrier has Acute and/or Critical Violations. These are one-time occurrences discovered during an investigation of noncompliance so severe that immediate corrective action is required. The Alert triggers direct contact by federal or state officials with the motor carrier.

The FMCSA "intervention" contact may simply be a warning letter that the carrier needs to pay closer attention to one area of safety compliance or it may entail a targeted or full compliance review. Interventions can result in fines, penalties and, in severe cases, disqualification as a motor carrier. Alerts are not just an opportunity to improve your scores, they are an alarm bell that improvement must occur. Heed that alarm by looking closely at the sections below for any BASIC where you have an Alert.

4

Finally, in the calculation of ISS scores, FMCSA gives greater mathematical weight to three of the BASICS: “Unsafe Driving,” “Hours of Service Compliance,” and “Crash Indicator.” “Unsafe Driving” covers speeding, reckless driving, improper lane change, inattention and not wearing seat belts. “Hours of Service Compliance” means noncompliance with hours-of-service regulations and improper time and duty records. The “Crash Indicator” considers a carrier’s history of crash involvement.

To improve your ISS score, look first to any BASIC where you may be in Alert status. Then see where you stand in these three priority BASICS: “Unsafe Driving,” “Hours of Service Compliance,” and “Crash Indicator,” paying particular attention to “Hours of Service Compliance.” Review the sections for each BASIC, below.

In the end, once FMCSA applies its mathematical formula, the result for that carrier is compared to similar carriers and a percentile ranking is set for that carrier. The percentile ranking says that the carrier’s safety compliance in that BASIC is worse than that percent of similar carriers. So, a high percentile ranking in any BASIC, in the carrier’s CSA score or its ISS ranking is not desirable. And again, a percentile ranking at or above the Intervention Threshold for that BASIC prioritizes that carrier for federal and state interventions.

QUICK QUIZ

1. How long do past inspections affect your ISS score?
2. What is an “Intervention Threshold”?
3. True or False: All BASICS are created equal.

Improving BASICS

- Stay on top of your BASICS scores. If you see an Alert, immediately focus your attention on improvement in that BASIC.
- Use the 24-month data cycle as the basis for your BASICS improvement plan, charting steps you will take each month to improve your scores.
- Review every violation, citation and audit/investigation finding. Challenge mistakes or inaccuracies through the FMCSA DataQs process.
- Use the FMCSA Crash Preventability Determination Program to remove non-preventable crashes from consideration in the “Crash Indicator” BASIC.

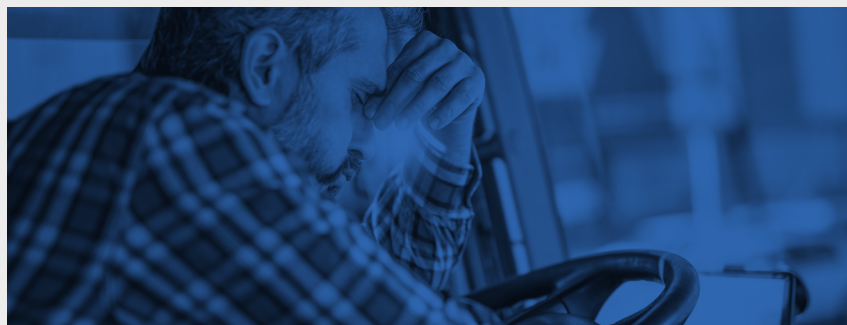
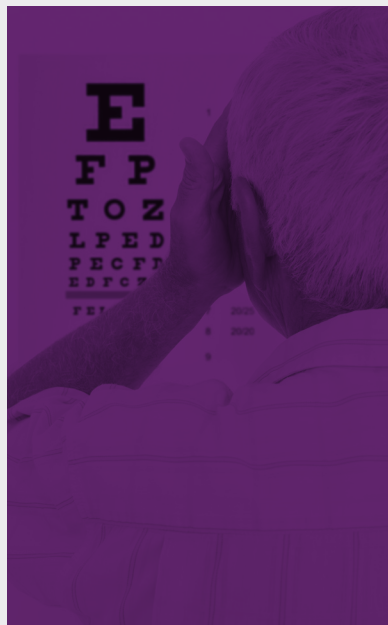
(Quick Quiz answers: 1) 24 months; 2) the percentile for any BASIC that will trigger direct FMCSA or state contact with a carrier; 3) False. FMCSA gives greater priority to three of the seven BASICS, with “Hours of Service Compliance” being #1.)

The Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICS

How does a motor carrier improve its Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICS?

The Driver Fitness BASIC addresses the licensing, training, experience, and medical qualifications of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers. The Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASIC deals with the operation of CMVs by drivers who, use, possess, display evidence of use, or are impaired due to alcohol, controlled substances, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications. These BASICS are safety and compliance measures often affecting a driver prior to hiring and outside of CMV operations – but they quickly receive enforcement attention and trigger investigations when problems are found.

Improving these BASICS means more than just checking boxes; it requires management attention to detail, thorough documentation, and alertness of the entire motor carrier team to any changes in driver behavior or vehicle operation. A critical factor in motor carrier safety is having the right people with the right skill set. The Driver Fitness BASIC assesses that skill set, while these two BASICS combined make sure those people are fit and focused.



Management Responsibility

Whether in the Driver Fitness BASIC, the Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASIC or any other BASIC, only management can give the direction, authority, tools and oversight to improve a motor carrier's safety compliance. This responsibility extends to ensuring that all drivers remain qualified and medically fit, with no alcohol or substance abuse problems. Consistency of results is the goal, and consistency is achieved when employees carry out their directions each and every time.

1

Provide Direction

For driver qualification, medical fitness and absence of substance abuse, the following directions, when carried out consistently, will assure that motor carriers hire and retain drivers and employees with the right skill set, fit and focused for the task at hand:

- Only hire safe, qualified drivers, and retain thorough documentation retained.
- Conduct and document all required pre-employment, random, return-to-duty, follow-up, reasonable suspicion, and post-crash drug and alcohol testing. That testing includes independent contractor drivers and all employees who hold a commercial driver's license (CDL), even those employed in a capacity other than as a driver who may occasionally drive a CMV
- Conduct all annual and pre-employment queries of driver records in the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse in a timely manner, with appropriate driver or driver applicant consent.
- Immediately report any reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol abuse by a driver to management.
- Immediately remove any drivers who test positive for drugs or alcohol or refuse to submit to a test from safety-sensitive positions, specifically including the operation of CMVs.
- Provide the name of a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) to any drivers who test positive for drugs or alcohol.
- All driver medical examinations must be conducted by a licensed medical examiner listed on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners.
- Note all driver medical conditions in the Driver Qualification File which the medical examiner deems to require monitoring, with a calendar alert whenever the CDL renewal, medical exam or exemption period is shortened.
- Reminded all drivers that their medical certificate depends on strict adherence to the directions of the medical examiner regarding any over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications and prescribed treatments for conditions such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. Failure to renew a medical certificate will require the motor carrier to remove the driver from duty, specifically including the operation of CMVs.

- Remind all drivers who have a medical exemption for vision, hearing, seizures or impaired limbs to renew those exemptions in a timely manner. Failure to renew an exemption will require the motor carrier to remove the driver from duty, specifically including the operation of CMVs.
- Carrier staff, and contractors such as a Medical Review Officer (MRO) or consortia/ third party administrator (C/TPA), immediately report to management any driver who tests positive for drugs or alcohol, who misses a scheduled drug test or medical exam, or who refuses to consent to a review of driver records in the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.
- Only assign drivers to vehicle combinations and loads for which they are appropriately licensed and trained, with the CDL endorsements needed.

2

Give Authority

To support employees in carrying out these directions, management must give authority to:

- Carrier hiring staff to hire only drivers who have a clean safety record and a willingness to adhere to federal and state laws and regulations and company policies.
- All employees and drivers to report to management any reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol abuse by a driver or any driver medical condition that could negatively impact safety.
- Carrier safety personnel to remove from CMV operation any driver whose speech, behavior or handling of equipment suggests the presence of drugs, alcohol or a medical condition that could negatively impact safety.
- Carrier safety personnel to remove from CMV operations any driver whose license, training or CDL endorsement is not appropriate for the vehicle combination or load or whose actions suggest a need for refresher training.
- Dispatchers to withhold driver assignments for vehicle combinations or loads for which carrier records show the driver is not appropriately licensed and trained, with the CDL endorsements needed.



3

Provide Tools

To complete their tasks successfully and efficiently, management must provide employees with the proper tools, both physical and financial. For driver qualification, medical fitness and absence of substance abuse, those tools include:

- Access to a list of medical examiners on the FMCSA's National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners
- Training for all employees and drivers about required drug tests and Clearinghouse queries.
- Reminders to drivers which drugs lead to a failed test, that marijuana remains a prohibited drug, that federal regulators urge extreme caution in the use of CBD oil and products, and what federal regulations say about alcohol consumption before duty.
- Training for all employees in the recognition of possible drug or alcohol abuse or medical conditions which might affect a driver's ability.
- A list of drivers showing their licenses and CDL endorsements for carrier safety personnel and dispatchers.
- Secure computerized communications to assure privacy when carrier hiring staff contact prior employers and access state Motor Vehicle Records (MVRs) on driver applicants.
- Refresher training for drivers of vehicles with special handling characteristics, particularly vehicles with high centers of gravity or carrying fluid loads.
- Secure, mobile communications allowing direct coordination between all team members.
- An Employer Notification Services (ENS) program that automatically sends updates to the motor carrier when a driver's license status changes, a crash occurs, and/or a conviction appears to the driver's record. The use of these services, in particular, those with "push" notifications, satisfies the FMCSA's requirement for a motor carrier to make an annual inquiry into each driver's record.

4

Conduct Oversight

Management is responsible for oversight. To assure consistency of results in driver qualification, medical fitness and absence of substance abuse, management must:

- Provide carrier hiring staff with guidance on how to attract, screen and qualify prospective drivers who are most likely to drive safely and within company policies, and how to identify potential high-risk drivers.
- When hiring, obtain MVRs from the state of license issuance for all prospective drivers and review for unsafe driving, violations and crashes over the past three years. Keep a current MVR in each driver qualification file.
- Review the employment records of all prospective drivers for the past three years and contact prior carriers for instances of unsafe driving, violations and crashes.
- Review new hire documentation for licensing and CDL endorsements appropriate to the carrier's operations.
- Maintain a calendar of medical exams, FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse queries and license renewals. Management must send reminders of deadlines to drivers and prohibit operation of CMVs when deadlines are missed. Missed deadlines negatively impact the motor carrier's Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASIC scores. Document any reasons a driver missed deadlines.
- In particular, provide reminders for license renewals at least one month in advance of the expiration date. States vary in their renewal process and drivers may be on the road for some of that time.
- Review FMCSA emergency declarations and waivers for extension dates and any eligibility, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements. Certain events (such as a pandemic or a natural disaster) may affect access to state driver licensing agencies, certified medical examiners and drug testing facilities. This should be considered when driver CDL renewal and medical exam deadlines approach or drug tests are scheduled.
- Document in either the Driver Qualification Files or confidential Controlled Substances and Alcohol files the following:
 - » all employee refresher training
 - » all driver background, licensing and hiring queries and results
 - » all FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse queries and results
 - » all drug tests and results
 - » all corrective actions taken, whether in regard to hiring decisions, Clearinghouse queries, drug test results or missed deadlines for tests, exams, queries or renewals.

Be assured, FMCSA or state investigators will look for policies and procedures supporting these management steps – directions, authority, tools, and oversight – when investigating driver fitness and controlled substances and alcohol compliance at a motor carrier.

Motor carrier alert. Many motor carriers may not realize that federal regulations on driver licensing, medical fitness and drug and alcohol testing apply to any carrier employee who operates a CMV and/or holds a CDL. This include any CDL holder not employed as a driver but may on occasion drive a CMV such as a mechanic taking a repaired truck out for a test run, the safety manager driving alongside a new hire, or even the company president who makes a delivery now and then.

While employees other than drivers who hold CDLs may personally receive notices from the state when their time comes for CDL renewals and medical exams, the motor carrier also has a duty to ensure timely completion of renewals and exams. In addition, FMCSA requires motor carriers to include these employees in the random drug testing pool, and the annual query of driver records in the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.

Any carrier employee who holds a CDL and may on occasion drive a CMV, even if not employed in the capacity as a driver, should be treated as a driver for purposes of the Driver Fitness and the Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICs. Any carrier employee who may operate a CMV for a carrier must have an up-to-date Driver Qualification File.

The most critical compliance element in the Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICs is consistent, thorough and accurate documentation in the Driver Qualification Files.

Enforcement officers will review driver licenses and CDL endorsements during roadside inspections and issue citations for any violation, such as expired licenses or lack of appropriate CDL endorsement for the vehicle combination or cargo. They will also remove from service any driver who shows evidence of drugs or alcohol use or possession.

During carrier investigations, FMCSA and state officials will follow up on these specific roadside instances to ascertain whether the motor carrier has kept corresponding records in the Driver Qualification Files or confidential Controlled Substances & Alcohol files. They will also determine appropriate action, such as removal of the driver from CMV operation, termination, or assignment to a Substance Abuse Professional (SAP) for return-to-duty processing.

IMPROVING A MOTOR CARRIER'S DRIVER FITNESS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES & ALCOHOL BASICS IS DEPENDENT ON CONSISTENT, THOROUGH AND ACCURATE DOCUMENTATION IN THE DRIVER QUALIFICATION FILES.

But, as mentioned, these BASICs are safety and compliance measures that may involve employee activity before hiring and outside of CMV operations. So, roadside inspections may not uncover carrier compliance shortcomings in the Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICs. This leads FMCSA to also compare what the carrier has entered into the Driver Qualification File with a selection of data retrieved from state driver licensing agencies, and from the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.

The following compliance issues can constitute a major blow against the motor carrier's Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICs scores:

- Failure of the motor carrier to document and respond appropriately to roadside enforcement actions.
- Failure of the motor carrier to document and respond appropriately to information the carrier should have retrieved from state driver licensing agencies, the FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse or from prior employers.
- Failure of the carrier to document and respond appropriately to reports received from MROs and drug testing facilities.

Team Responsibility

Motor carriers get paid to deliver safely and on time. Shortcomings in carrier safety affect all team members. At motor carriers with a robust safety culture, team members know that the ultimate goal is not just federal compliance or self-interest, but protecting each other, the company, its customers, and everyone on the road. Reporting suspected drug or alcohol abuse by drivers is not only required of all employees, but also the right thing to do for everyone's safety.

Driver Responsibility

Drivers, including any carrier employee who may on occasion drive a CMV, even if not employed as a driver, have a personal and legal responsibility to: remain properly licensed; medically fit; and free from drug and alcohol abuse, including the misuse of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications.

Failure in any of these regards will require the motor carrier to remove the driver from duty, specifically including the operation of CMVs. Under the carrier's progressive disciplinary policy, these failures may lead to warnings, suspensions and ultimately to termination.

If a motor carrier continues to allow a driver who is not properly licensed, medically fit or free from drug use and alcohol abuse to operate a CMV, it will negatively impact the carrier's Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICS scores. So, both the driver and the motor carrier have a vested interest in the driver's timely and successful completion of their license renewal, medical exam, and drug test.

1

LICENSE RENEWALS

While federal regulations cover the training and testing required to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL), as well as the age of a regulated driver in interstate commerce, states conduct the actual testing, issuance, and renewal of licenses. CDLs do expire, with the length of CDL validity ranging from five to eight years, depending upon the state of issuance.

The process to renew a license also depends on the state of issuance. Some states allow online renewals, others by mail, while some require an in-person appointment. For that reason, management must make it a priority to actively remind drivers of upcoming license renewal deadlines. Those reminders should go out at least a month in advance of the expiration date. After all, drivers may be on the road for part of that time.

1

LICENSE RENEWALS CONTINUED...

Just as management should remind drivers of upcoming license renewal deadlines, drivers should make themselves aware of their specific state renewal requirements:

- The license renewal requirements reside on the website of the state driver licensing agency. State's often print that website address on the face of the license, otherwise it may require a phone call.
- Commonly, states require:
 - » completion of an application for CDL renewal,
 - » a recent eye exam to show that the driver has acceptable vision to drive commercial vehicles. (drivers may need to take an eye test at the state agency),
 - » a copy of the driver's Medical Certificate, and
 - » payment for all applicable license renewal fees (which vary by state).
- States may require more information if the driver has a record of driver violations or crashes.
- If the driver also seeks a new CDL endorsement, more than just renewal of the CDL itself, they must allow for additional time for training and testing, plus additional fees.
- If the driver misses the CDL renewal deadline, they may need to take a new CDL test, possibly including a test drive. The fees will exceed those for a simple renewal.
- Drivers who miss a license renewal deadline should immediately contact the carrier and report the reason they missed the renewal deadline.

2

MEDICAL EXAMS

FMCSA regulations state that an individual with a clinical diagnosis or medical history of any condition that could interfere with their safe driving ability cannot medically qualify to operate a CMV in interstate commerce. Driver medical examinations are valid for up to 24 months.

Just as management should remind drivers of upcoming medical examinations, drivers themselves should understand some basic facts about medical examinations:

- The medical examiner may issue a medical certificate for a time period shorter than 24 months after a clinical diagnosis or review of a driver's medical history showing a condition that could interfere with safe driving ability.
- Any driver unable to perform their normal duties due to physical or mental injury or disease may be required to receive an exam.
- The medical examiner may make the driver's medical certificate dependent upon the driver taking certain OTC or prescribed medications, or adhering to a treatment schedule for the condition.



2

MEDICAL EXAMS CONTINUED...

- Common conditions that, untreated, would disqualify a driver include moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) and insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. FMCSA offers treatment guidance for both conditions, but the medical examiner makes the final decision.
- At the next medical exam, which could be sooner than 24 months, the medical examiner will require the driver to provide records of adherence to the treatment prescribed. Failure to provide adequate treatment records could prevent the medical examiner from issuing a renewed medical certificate.
- The medical examiner may also determine that a driver's vision, hearing, history of seizures or impaired arms and legs may interfere with safe driving. The driver may seek an exemption from FMCSA for those conditions.
- FMCSA requires up to 180 days to rule on an exemption application, during which time the driver cannot operate a CMV in interstate commerce. FMCSA does not have authority to grant waivers or exemptions from state intrastate commerce requirements.
- Drivers with missing or impaired limbs, hands, feet, fingers or toes and who have an installed prosthetic device may apply for the FMCSA Skill Performance Evaluation (SPE) program, which allows the driver to demonstrate the ability to drive the truck safely by completing on-and off-road activities.
- Drivers who miss a scheduled medical exam should immediately contact the carrier and report the reason they missed the medical exam.

3

DRUG TESTS

While obtaining a CDL, every driver learns about federal regulations on drug and alcohol use and the conduct of pre-employment, random, post-crash, reasonable suspicion and return-to-duty tests. Still, drivers are often exposed to misinformation and folklore. That misinformation can lead to violations and undermine a carrier's efforts to improve its Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICS score.

Just as management should remind drivers of the rules surrounding controlled substances and alcohol, through the issuance of a Controlled Substance and Alcohol Policy, drivers themselves should commit some basic facts to heart:

- The blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for CMV drivers is 0.04%, half of the legal level for non-CDL drivers, including motorists.
- CMV drivers must not consume alcohol within four hours of beginning duty. That four-hour prohibition is regardless of the CMV driver's BAC at the time.
- The federal drug tests look for (a) marijuana metabolites, (b) cocaine metabolites, (c) amphetamines, (d) opioids (including synthetic opioids hydrocodone, hydromorphone, oxycodone and oxycodone), and (e) phencyclidine (PCP).
- Marijuana remains a Schedule 1 drug on the federal level and its use can trigger a positive drug test and disqualify a CMV driver. The use of recreational or medical marijuana, even if legal in a state or locality, can result in a positive federal drug test and disqualify the driver.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation strongly cautions CMV drivers against the use of CBD oil and associated products. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not certify the levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the primary psychoactive component of marijuana, present in CBD products, thus the label on the CBD product regarding THC levels may or may not be accurate. Above a 0.3% concentration of THC, the CBD product is legally marijuana, a Schedule 1 drug.
- Controlled substances and alcohol, even below their proscribed concentration levels, can interact with the over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications used by a CMV driver. Drivers should follow the strict guidance of a medical professional in their use of any medication.
- Failure of a driver to appear for a federally mandated drug test is a violation and will disqualify the driver from safety-sensitive positions, specifically including the operation of CMVs. Drivers should immediately contact the carrier and provide the reason they missed the drug test.



Motor carriers face a continual challenge in attracting and retaining quality drivers. Complying with federal regulations on Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol requires detailed management attention and documentation, as well as a commitment by the entire motor carrier team and drivers. Those regulations, when followed, do produce drivers with the right skill set and who are fit and focused.

Improving the Driver Fitness and the Controlled Substances & Alcohol BASICs requires consistency, with every hiring procedure, drug test administered, record reviewed, and Clearinghouse query conducted. That consistency contributes to a good Inspection Selection System score, which in turn leads to qualifying for and continuing in a weigh station bypass program like PrePass. Most important, it means improved safety for all team members and for everyone sharing the road.

QUICK QUIZ

1. Name the six occasions for drug tests.
2. For how long is a Medical Certificate valid?
3. True or False: Only employed drivers are subject to Driver Fitness and Controlled Substances & Alcohol requirements.

Helpful Hints

- Many motor carriers assign senior drivers to familiarize new hires with the carrier's safety culture. Talking to someone who does the same job and faces the same requirements, like drug testing, is often easier than talking to management.
- Drivers may need to be reminded of upcoming CDL renewals, medical exams, and drug tests. But a spoonful of sugar – “Congrats on another great year!” – and help routing the driver near those appointments can make things go better.
- Checklists and calendars. Those are the essentials for management to keep Driver Qualification Files complete and up-to-date.

(Quick Quiz answers: 1) Pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion, post-crash, return-to-duty and follow-up.; 2) Up to 24 months, but the medical examiner may set a shorter time before re-examination; 3) False. Independent contractor drivers and all employees who hold a CDL and may on occasion drive a CMV, even if employed in a capacity other than as a driver, must meet these requirements.)



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