



TRUCKER

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Focus



TRUCKING INTO A
NEW YEAR

NEW YEAR. NEW CHALLENGES.

The past several years have seen the trucking industry grappling with a wealth of challenges, including:

- *Rising costs such as equipment, parts, fuel, labor, insurance, and utilities*
- *Cyclical freight volumes and rates*
- *Shorter hauls, putting more pressure on the importance of efficient detention times*
- *Technology, app load boards, equipment monitoring, route and fuel optimization, telematics, and a host of additional operational and compliance requirements*

These challenges may look daunting, but a brief look at history shows that the trucking industry has faced continual change and has not only adapted but improved. We've come a long way from the 1910 Avery Truck—with a 4-cylinder engine, 3-speed transmission, chain-drive axle, and top speed of 15 mph!

The good news is that the U.S. trucking industry is vital and will continue growing in the years to come, and here is why:

- *The U.S. has the highest GDP in the world and GDP growth will drive an increased demand to move goods.*
- *There is an ever-growing demand for truck drivers, with some analysts saying the industry needs to hire as many as 1 million drivers.*
- *According to the ATA, trucking moves over 72% of the nation's freight by weight (nearly 11 billion tons) and generates nearly 81% of the nation's freight revenues (\$875.5 billion).*

As we look forward, there are other trends that will impact trucking operations, including:

- *An increased focus on contract hauling with established pricing, due to the uncertainty of today's spot market.*
- *Greater recognition of the importance of customer service built on quality drivers, equipment, technology, and back-office operations.*
- *Continued supply chain challenges, with repair parts, trailers, and trucks taking longer to obtain and costing more.*
- *The continued shortage of drivers, particularly those with experience and clean records.*
- *The continued incorporation of technology into all areas of trucking, including in-cab telematics and data analytics throughout the operation.*

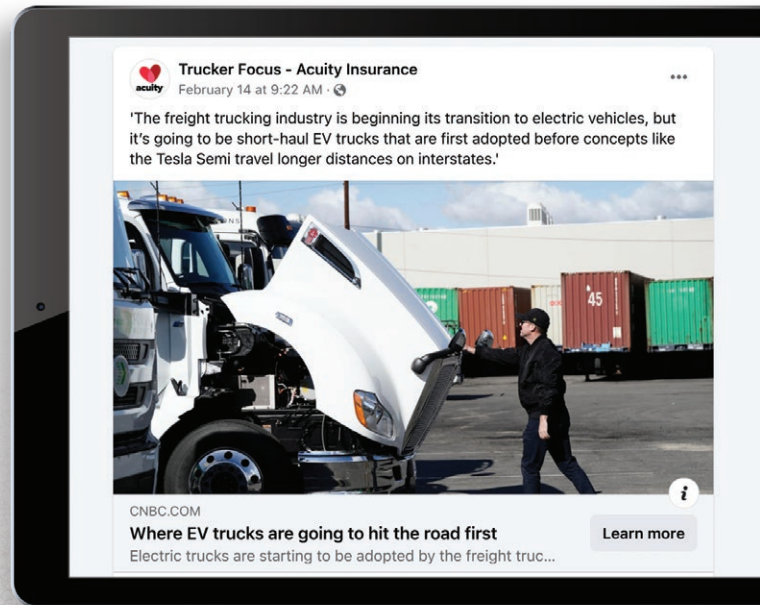
For further reading on this topic, the American Transportation Research Institute's study on the Critical Issues in the Trucking Industry – 2022 provides some good data.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

 facebook.com/acuitytrucking

No one can say for certain what impact electric vehicles (EVs) will have on trucking, but the topic certainly generates discussion among truckers! Join in the discussion and check out other interesting topics on our Trucker Focus Facebook page at facebook.com/acuitytrucking.



WIN \$100!

FIND THE FLAGPOLE TO BE ENTERED!



Acuity is proud to hoist a 70- by 140-foot American flag on a 400-foot flagpole at our headquarters in Sheboygan, WI. Visit www.acuity.com/flag to learn more.

To enter, find the flagpole hidden in this issue and send an email with the location to flagcontest@acuity.com. We'll randomly choose a winner from the correct entries received by April 30, 2023.

WINNER

of last issue's contest was:

Tiffany L. Miller

Hummel Group, Inc.
Berlin, OH

This contest is not open to employees of Acuity or their immediate family members. For a complete list of rules, visit www.acuity.com/flagcontestrules.

SEVEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL ROADSIDE INSPECTIONS

By Cliff Johnson, Trucking Consultant

In my role, I have a lot of conversations about roadside inspection struggles. During my 30-plus years in the industry, I have learned there is often a correlation between roadside inspections and CSA scores. Although many people think of inspections negatively, they can be managed in a positive light.

Here are seven ways to turn a roadside inspection into a positive experience:

1 Understand roadside inspections and CSA scores

Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) is the safety compliance and enforcement program of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) that holds motor carriers and drivers accountable for their role in safety. CSA affects motor carriers, including owner-operators, by identifying those with safety problems to prioritize them for interventions such as warning letters and investigations. CSA affects drivers because their safety performance and compliance impact their safety records and, while working for a carrier, will impact their carrier's safety record.

Your company's safety data appears online in FMCSA's Safety Measurement System (SMS). FMCSA updates the SMS once a month with data from roadside inspections, including driver and vehicle violations, crash reports from the last two years, and investigation results. The SMS considers:

- *The number of safety violations and inspections*
- *The severity of safety violations or crashes*
- *When the safety violations occurred, with recent events weighted more heavily*
- *The number of trucks a carrier operates and the number of vehicle miles traveled*
- *Acute and critical violations found during investigations*

FMCSA organizes SMS data into seven Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICs): unsafe driving, crash indicator, hours-of-service compliance, vehicle maintenance, controlled substances/alcohol, hazardous materials compliance, and driver fitness.

The CSA database includes only violations that occurred while drivers were operating commercial vehicles. If you are driving under a carrier's DOT number, your violations will be assigned to that carrier.

2 Develop a process to make sure your documentation is ready for inspection

Registration, annual vehicle inspections, insurance, driver licenses, medical cards, and other documentation must be maintained and valid. If special circumstances are being used, such as leased vehicles, make sure your drivers understand the circumstances and are prepared to explain them to the enforcement officer. Simply put, if the enforcement officer cannot understand what is going on, they are far more likely to write a citation.



BEST OF THE BLOG



3 Become inspection ready

One of the easiest but often overlooked items is training mechanics and drivers on how to perform a proper driver vehicle inspection report (DVIR). I have visited numerous motor carriers that were adamant their equipment was in good mechanical condition, and they had no idea why they were getting picked on by the DOT. However, upon our mutual inspection, we discovered very worn brake linings, defective or missing lights, bad tires, and even brake hardware kits hanging out of a wheel—all of which were easily visible. A good training guide for proper inspections is the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) handbook.

In my experience, what is audited, gets done. To ensure drivers are completing DVIRs, some operations will randomly place a small tag or ribbon on an oil dipstick, slack adjuster, glad-hand, or wheel stud. When found by the driver during their inspection, the driver receives positive reinforcement. If not found, the manager knows the vehicle was not properly inspected and an opportunity for coaching or training the driver exists.

Word of warning: When a troubled fleet begins enforcing DVIRs, this process may be new to both drivers and mechanics. As a result, it is important that a functional process of intake exists, where the maintenance shop can intake and repair identified safety defects prior to releasing them back into service. If this step is missed, frustration may occur and drivers may start pencil whipping the DVIRs.

4 Maintain hours-of-service (HOS) rules

Whether using an ELD, air mile, or other exemption, make sure your driver is trained and prepared to provide current records of duty, discuss the method being used, and answer HOS questions during a roadside stop.

5 Compliance with traffic regulations

I have noticed it is common to see a truck pulled over for speeding, where the driver receives a warning and the truck is inspected. Train your drivers to avoid bringing attention to their driving by obeying traffic signs, wearing seat belts, avoiding distracted driving, and not exceeding posted speeds.

6 Empower your employees

In many companies, experienced drivers are not trained when they are hired. Regardless of experience, training is crucial in successful onboarding of a new driver. If your drivers are not trained or empowered to be successful for themselves within your company, then it is doubtful they can be successful for your company.

7 Setting goals toward improvement

You can obtain your score at csa.fmcsa.dot.gov. When you enter your USDOT number and PIN into the SMS login page, you will be able to locate your score. If you don't have a PIN, you can request one from USDOT.

I usually recommend posting your company's scores. For example, if your company's unsafe driving or vehicle maintenance is hovering around 80, set a goal for 50 and make and execute a plan to reach that goal. Remember, successful plans often include training employees and auditing to determine if you are achieving the results you want for your company.

ASK THE CONSULTANT

Cliff Johnson
is Acuity's Trucking
Consultant. Have a
question for Cliff?
Reach him at
cliff@acuity.com.



Ask Cliff

“What are some tips for improving safety and managing risk?”

To change the future, fleets must first understand their past by reviewing their CSA scores and analyzing the accidents and violations found within.

One of the best examples I can share is on the Vehicle Maintenance Behavioral Analysis Safety Improvement Category (BASIC) score. In my experience, most fleets that are in a maintenance alert status are there because of three main issues: brakes, lights, and tires—or, as I like to call them, BLT violations. I have seen corrective actions in these areas produce marked improvement in CSA scores year over year.

You pay your drivers to complete pre- and post-trip inspections, and you have (or should have) a maintenance process in place to fix any safety defects in a timely manner. But is it working? If you are receiving BLT or other equipment-related violations, it's time to take a closer look at why. Take the time to be proactive and audit your operations. I know this is difficult for time-strapped trucking operations, but it's far better, easier, and more cost-effective than having the DOT audit you on the side of the road.

There are other issues that are predictors of future losses you should address as well. The American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) “Predicting Truck Crash Involvement 2022” report provides important insight into driving behaviors and violations that generate a statistically significant likelihood of a future crash for that driver. This

analysis compares findings with the previous crash predictor reports to improve understanding of positive and negative crash prediction trends over time and find correlation between CSA scores and crashes.

According to the report, the top five most reliable predictors of a truck driver's future crashes are:

- **Reckless driving violation (114%)**
- **Failure to use / improper signal violation (89%)**
- **Having a past crash (88%)**
- **Failure to yield right of way violation (85%)**
- **Improper or erratic lane change violation (79%)**

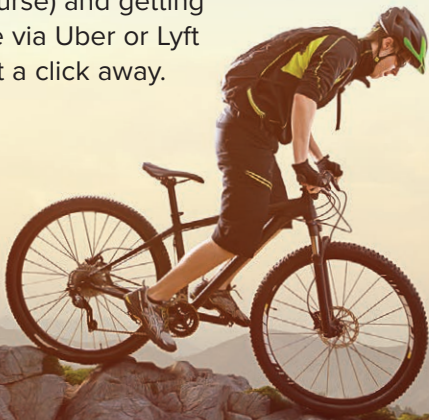
What are other opportunities you see to address risks and prevent them from turning into sunk costs? I'd love to hear from you! Email me at: cliff.johnson@acuity.com.



FINDING FUN WHILE ON THE ROAD

It is often said that professional truck driving is not just a career—it's a lifestyle.

And today, it's easier than ever to "get away" even when you're on the road. Gone are the days when drivers had to use pay phones to call into dispatch and hope taxi services would be available if they wanted to spend some time away from their truck. Today, plans can be made via cell phone (when safely parked, of course) and getting a ride via Uber or Lyft is just a click away.



Here are some activity ideas you might not have thought of. Have you considered:

- *Renting a bicycle, motorcycle, or kayak?*
- *Taking a guided fishing, hiking, or rafting trip?*
- *Exploring museums, zoos, or other venues?*
- *Documenting your journey via photography or journaling?*
- *Pursuing online education or even an advanced degree in your down time?*
- *Researching your family genealogy?*
- *Investment research?*
- *Trying a new hands-on hobby like wood carving or knitting?*

Sometimes the journey is less about us than it is about helping or sharing with others. How about:

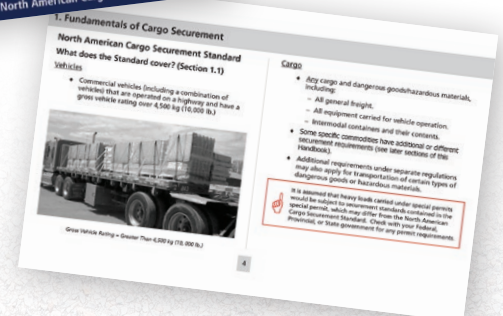
- *Visiting a nursing home. If you travel with a pet, ask permission to bring your furry friend with you.*
- *Volunteering at a charity in ways that fit your schedule, such as staffing an after-hours helpline.*

Whatever your passion, trucking offers many opportunities to learn, grow, and make a difference in the lives of others.

Motor Carrier TOOLBOX

Acuity's Motor Carrier Toolbox serves as a one-stop shop for resources that help trucking businesses become more compliant and run more efficiently. It includes a wealth of information and provides access to tools, programs, and policies designed to help motor carriers comply with CSA and other FMCSA/DOT regulations.

Check out this handy guide on cargo securement! It's available without a sign-in at www.acuity.com/mctb under the *Truck Driver Training* menu.



TEAR ALONG THE PERFORATION LINE

SAFETY FIRST WHEN BACKING



- ☑ Avoid backing when possible
- ☑ **G. O. A. L.** GET
OUT
AND
LOOK *every time*
- ☑ Communicate with your helpers/spotters
- ☑ Be confident—stop the maneuver if needed
- ☑ Prevent incidents through awareness and patience

SAFETY FIRST WHEN BACKING

The following section should be read and discussed with employees:

Backing up your vehicle should be avoided if possible, but some situations, like delivering to loading docks and tight spaces, may require you to back. Knowing how to back up safely is important.

Avoid backing when possible

- Look for opportunities to pull through and position your vehicle to avoid backing into or out of the area.
- Seeing what's in front of you is easier than seeing what's behind you.

Communicate with your helpers/spotters

- Be clear with your helper about your concerns and how to best assist you.
- Agree on hand signals or voice commands ahead of time.
- Never let a helper ride in the back of your trailer, hang off a loading dock, or get between your vehicle and another object.

What words or hand signals do you use to communicate?

Be confident—stop the maneuver if needed

- Reset and try again.
- If you've blocked traffic, allow other drivers to pass if possible.
- Learn from your mistakes to avoid issues next time.

Has anyone had to stop and start over? What did you do differently the second time?



Get Out And Look every time

- Conditions change, so check everytime.
- Looking up, down, left, right, in front of, and behind your vehicle should be part of your pre-backing safety check.

Prevent incidents through awareness and patience

- Get out and look for hazards. That's the G.O.A.L.
- Be patient and wait for a safe time to perform your maneuver.

Has anyone witnessed a backing accident that would have been prevented with awareness or patience?





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TEAR ALONG THE PERFORATION LINE