

Top 4 Reasons You're Being Audited

FMCSA off-site audits increased by 400% in 2020 and are on track to nearly double in 2021

New carriers are monitored closely for safety and compliance. New entrant carriers are monitored for 18 months. Every carrier that obtains a new interstate USDOT number will undergo a safety audit. Safety audits are not the only way to come under the watchful eyes of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The most common reasons for audits and compliance reviews are when the operation:

- △ Is a "new-entrant carrier" who just received a USDOT number,
- △ Has a high score in one of the CSA BASICS,
- △ Has had a safety complaint lodged against it, or
- △ Was involved in a serious crash.

New Entrant Audit

Within 12 months of beginning operations, a carrier will undergo a new entrant audit. Approximately 40,000 new carriers are audited annually. Most new entrant audits are conducted off-site meaning that the investigation will occur remotely with records either manually or electronically provided. In order to continue operations, the new carrier must demonstrate safe operations, maintain accurate and up-to-date records, conduct periodic or annual vehicle inspections, have a vehicle maintenance program, and of course, pass the audit.

High BASIC scores

All carriers' safety compliance are monitored through the Compliance Safety Accountability (CSA) program. CSA tracks negatives safety events usually found during roadside inspections, accidents, or investigations. The program tracks violations of safety regulations and crashes in one of seven Behavioral Analysis Safety Improvement Categories or BASICS. For most of the BASICS, carriers are compared with other carriers with a similar number of inspections. When over a set threshold, carriers will see additional inspections. If the carrier's performance does not improve, additional reviews will likely follow.

Safety Complaints

The FMCSA maintains a National Consumer Complaint Database. The agency encourages consumers, drivers, and industry professionals to file complaints against carriers for a number of concerns — principally of which are witnessing safety problems. Complaints are maintained in the company's file as part of its permanent record. These complaints, in addition to other data sources, are used to decide if a carrier should be investigated. Carriers may have been flying "under the radar" can suddenly find themselves with a notice that the FMCSA will be conducting a review.

Serious Accidents

Serious accidents that result in an investigation generally fall into one of two categories. The first is a high-profile accident that hits the news or well-known people were involved. The second is conducted when a post-accident investigation indicates the vehicle had numerous mechanical problems that existed before the accident. This is particularly troublesome when the mechanical failure or issue may have been a contributing factor in the accident. The investigator will wonder how the vehicle was being operated under any circumstance. The investigator will contact the carrier to discover the answer.

A carrier that is prepared has little to fear from a new entrant safety audit. The FMCSA wants to reassured that the carrier has the safety management controls in place to operate safely and compliantly. The other common reasons to come to be audited, investigated, or reviewed are much more likely to be uncomfortable. Even more so if a new carrier.