

What Happened to the ISS?

With the advent of the new CSA carrier and driver assessment system, the "old" ISS seems to have been forgotten or assumed to have been totally replaced by CSA. This is not the case - the ISS rating is still in effect! Several shippers have expressed concern or confusion re: how to assess carriers in light of the new CSA scoring system. The information below provides a very good summary of CSA and ISS.

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Many motor carriers and Shippers have been wondering, "Where did the ISS go?" For some, the first question may be, "What is the ISS?" The Inspection Selection System (ISS) is a quick, easy to use, "decision-making aid" to guide law enforcement officers in selecting vehicles and drivers for roadside inspection. The ISS takes the fairly complicated data from the Safety Measurement System (SMS), which is operated by Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), that rates carriers based on their safety performance and packages it into an easy-to-use format for officers on the road.

The ISS assigns a single number between 0 and 100 to a carrier based on its safety performance in each of the seven Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS) of CSA: 1) Unsafe Driving, 2) Fatigued Driving, 3) Driver Fitness, 4) Drugs and Alcohol, 5) Vehicle Maintenance, 6) Cargo-Related, and 7) Crash. *Note that categories Cargo-Related and Crash are not made public due to the FMCSA's continued review and adjustment of these categories. At some point in the future, when all evaluative criteria and ratings are finalized, these two categories are also planned to be made public.* This ISS number is then used to generate a recommendation of Pass, Optional, or Inspect, to be used by inspectors when selecting vehicles and drivers for inspection. Carriers that have a recommendation of "Inspect" or "Optional" see a lot more roadside inspections than carriers that have the "Pass" recommendation.

In order for the carrier to end up with the "Pass" recommendation, the FMCSA must have adequate data on the carrier and the carrier must be below the intervention threshold in all seven BASICS. If the carrier is over in even one BASIC, the carrier will have at best an "Optional" recommendation. If the carrier is over in multiple BASICS, the carrier will end up with the "Inspect" recommendation.

Insufficient data leads to inspections

There is an additional component to the ISS scoring process that all carriers and shippers need to be aware of: the "data sufficiency" standards. If the FMCSA does not have enough data on a carrier (no or very few roadside inspections), the carrier is given either the "Inspect" or "Optional" recommendation (depending on how much data the FMCSA has - none will lead to an "Inspect" recommendation, while some can lead to a recommendation of "Optional"). Also, if a carrier is "one inspection away" from having a score in a BASIC, the system gives the carrier the "Inspect" recommendation.

This "data sufficiency" element of the system is an important point to understand. Many carriers see that the SMS is not calculating BASIC scores on them (due to the FMCSA not having enough data) and think this is a "good thing." However, not having scores in BASICS leads to carriers being given the "Inspect" or "Optional" recommendation, which as was mentioned earlier will lead to the carrier seeing a lot more roadside inspections. Going one step further, carriers also need to understand that once the additional needed

data is collected (for example, the carrier has one more inspection) and the carrier gets a score, it may not be a good one if the inspection results in a violation.

Why it is important to know where carriers stand?

Very few roadside inspections are conducted on the roadside based on "random selection." Most of the time, the officer has a reason for selecting a certain vehicle and driver for inspection. The two most common reasons are:

- An existing violation was seen. This can include a driving violation (such as speeding), a vehicle violation (light not working, excessive window tinting), or entering an inspection facility with an obvious problem (overweight, loose cargo securement devices, lights not working). Many times the initial violation was minor when compared to the other violations that were discovered during the inspection that followed.
- ISS score and recommendation. The officer (either at a fixed facility or on the road) enters the carrier's DOT number into their system and sees the carrier's ISS numerical score and recommendation. By the way, the officers can also see other information on the carrier, and even the vehicle (how long since the vehicle in question has been inspected, what BASICs the carrier is deficient in, what the carrier's violation rate is in various areas, etc.).

Best Regards,



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