Importance of FMCSA Pre-Employment Screening Program (PSP) to Canadian Carriers

When hiring Commercial Drivers, carriers always verify the Canadian driving record, which is important. But what if the driver has been driving to the US as well? Then validating Canadian driving history only demonstrates half of their experience. So, how can we as Canadian Carriers substantiate the US driving history of a driver?

Canadian carriers with an active US operating authority can use the US Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) tool called Pre-employment Screening Program (PSP) to access driver crash and inspections records for US incidents. This program helps carriers make more informed hiring decisions by providing secure and electronic access to a commercial driver’s history. PSP information comes from the US Motor Carrier Management Information System (MCMIS), which tracks crashes and inspections in the States. The PSP maintains 5 years of crash records and 3 years of inspection records. Drivers who have records of frequent accidents and violations found during inspection may continue in this pattern. Knowing this information may help you avoid a bad hiring decision or enable you to put a proactive training program in place to combat future occurrences.

A study conducted by the FMCSA showed that carriers who use the PSP for hiring decisions showed an improvement in crash rates by 8% and also experienced a decrease in driver out-of-service rates by 17% on average.

Here are some facts and benefits about the Pre-Employment Screening Program:

• Helps carriers make a more informed hiring decision; A driver with an excellent PSP record should translate into fewer potential driver issues, anticipated performance expectations and above all due diligence in hiring the best person for the job
• Keeping drivers with excellent PSP records on the road allows drivers and carriers to ensure quality and optimal work performance. Therefore, improving productivity and safety for everyone
• To access records, carriers pay an annual $25 subscription fee for the service or $100 for fleets with more than 100 power units, and $10 per driver history
• Drivers may also request a copy of their own records. Individual drivers pay only $10 for their records, with no annual fee
• Records are available 24 hours a day via the PSP web site.

Note that carriers must obtain the applicant’s written consent before requesting a driver record by implementing the FMCSA required driver written disclosure & authorization form. This form must be retained for at least three years in order to respond to future audit requests. Failure to submit the required forms is subject to penalties.

For more information, or to enroll for the service, visit FMCSA’s PSP website (www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov).

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March 31, 2016 and June 2016 are dates to pay attention to for any carrier hauling food products. The former is the US implementation date, and the later, the Canadian implementation dates. Programs must be in place a year later for both. So what is it all about? It is similar to the requirements for any company that has gone through any form of ISO certification – that is document, document, train, document, and audit – a very paperwork-orientated program. Essentially, it means that carriers hauling food through and into Canada and the U.S. will require the creation of, and in conjunction with shippers, a program of Preventative Controls (PCP’s). The object is to ensure the sanitary transportation practices in the transportation of food in order to ensure that food is not transported under conditions that may render the food adulterated. The program applies to shippers, receivers, and carriers who carry food. It does not apply to raw agricultural commodities carried by farm, nor the transportation of shelf stable food fully enclosed by a container, live food animals, and compressed food gases. The impact: vehicles and transportation equipment must be designed, maintained, and stored in a way that will prevent food from becoming filthy, putrid, decomposed or otherwise unfit or rendered injurious to health. For temperature controlled cargo, the equipment must be equipped with an indicating thermometer, temperature-measuring device, or temperature-recording device installed to show the temperature accurately within the compartment. The program involves the shipper significantly and PCP’s between the shipper and the carrier, including indicated temperature requirements. A big step forward is the fact that shippers must provide sanitary wash facilities for drivers. Documentation on shipper’s and carriers’ PCP’s will need to be documented and agreed to. For bulk carriers, documentation on the three previous loads will be needed, along with a history record of the cleanout processes and dates. And overall, training required of shippers and drivers will be critical. Among other things, it is expected that cargo claims for products will become significant.

Carriers are urged to consult the full regulations at the sources outlined below:

**US:**
http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/FSMA/ucm334115.htm#compliance_dates

**Canada:**

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According to recent surveys by the Federal Motor Carrier Administration, 16% of commercial drivers reported that they do not wear their seatbelts consistently. And according to Transport Canada, 32.56% of fatalities as a result of motor vehicle collisions between 2009 and 2013 have contributing factors of drivers not wearing seatbelts.

There are also a lot of misconceptions regarding the use of seat belts, especially among professional drivers who may view a seat belt as uncomfortable, or as something that hampers free movement, or something not entirely necessary because “good drivers don’t need it”.

This attitude has to be avoided at all costs and drivers have to be sensitized to the importance of seat belts. Of course, seat belt use is not promoted on the suspicion that there are in fact no “good drivers”, but because vehicle occupants might be involved in a crash caused by other drivers, bad weather, mechanical failure, or tire blowout. Wearing a safety belt prevents injuries and fatalities, reduces the chances of ejection, and helps protect your head and spinal cord from impact damage.

Drivers who do not wear seatbelts also tend to engage in other unsafe driving behaviours such as speeding and committing violations. Drivers who do not use seatbelts will negatively impact a fleet’s safety record as well as increase insurance claims and compensation costs.

Seat belts are in fact the easiest and cheapest way to avoid injury in a crash. They do not require any special technology and are fitted in all vehicles. Just like the rest of the equipment of your fleet vehicles, they have to be maintained and you have to be sure they are fit for purpose and are worn properly by drivers. Effectiveness and comfort might decrease if seat belts are not worn correctly and you will have to make sure there are no worn or broken components that are either in need of repair or replacement.

You can raise awareness on the use of seat belts through a specific training program that emphasises the importance of this device and offers tips for recognizing any problem in the equipment; but rule number one is always to ensure that it is worn. Fleets must ensure that their policies include the mandatory use of seat belts by all drivers and passengers.

Drivers or passengers using the sleeper berth must also use the safety belt and/or the sleeper berth web net. A passenger ejected from the sleeper berth will undoubtedly sustain significant injuries and could interfere with the driver trying to control and recover the vehicle.

Wearing a safety belt is the simplest and most effective way to stay safe. When safety belts are not used, the potential for crash-related injuries and death increases dramatically.

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References:
Communication directly impacts a company’s bottom line. If it is done effectively, such as trying to win new business by pointing out the carrier’s reliability and exemplary safety record, then this can often lead to successful contract bids, increased profits, and company growth. On the other hand, poor communication skills can cripple an organization and lead to significant losses. Never is this more prevalent than with driver turnover.

When a quality driver leaves the organization, the motor carrier must invest time and resources to recruit and train a replacement. In addition, an empty-seated truck parked out on the lot represents a lack of revenue being generated. When asking insureds the reasons drivers give for leaving, money is surprisingly not the answer most frequently given. Rather, the response is usually related to communication. Honesty, support, and home time seemed to matter more to drivers than pay and benefits, so this article will address those. If compensation is a factor in driver turnover, that should certainly be addressed.

Honesty is the best policy, especially when having to deliver bad news. Management should be cautious about how they approach communicating information that may not be well received. Begin with creating an environment that makes it easy for the driver to be receptive to the news. Don’t blurt it out and catch them off guard. Instead, wait for a good time when he/she is not driving and ask if it is a good time to talk. If they say no, have them suggest a good time to call back. Next, respect the driver by providing accurate information and not making empty promises just to “lighten the blow”. This could cause a misunderstanding, and in turn, create confusion, mistrust, and resentment. By being open and direct, drivers will appreciate the openness and honesty even if it is something they do not want to hear.

Next, drivers typically define support as a “caring and concerned” environment. Everyone likes to feel appreciated, especially when you’re miles away from home. Ensuring driver needs will be addressed in a clear and direct manner can alleviate their stress and allow them to stay focused on driving while matters are being resolved.

And finally, make every effort to accommodate special requests for home time. Establishing a company policy requiring due notice puts the responsibility on the driver to plan in advance and give the company adequate time to reasonably meet their needs. Making this happen with minimal business interruption can go a long way to showing the driver the company supports them and wants them to be with the company for a long time.

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