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Controlled Substances/Alcohol Overview

What is the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC? The Controlled Substances/Alcohol Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Category (BASIC) is one of seven categories that the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) uses to determine how a motor carrier ranks relative to other carriers with a similar number of safety events (i.e., inspections, violations, or crashes). The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC addresses the requirements in Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), specifically 49 CFR Parts 382 and 392. The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC deals with the operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) by drivers who are impaired due to alcohol, illegal drugs, and the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medications. Some example roadside violations that may cause a motor carrier to rank poorly in this BASIC include a driver(s) failing an alcohol test, which indicates an alcohol level of .02 or greater, and operating under the influence of illegal drugs.

How do motor carriers know where they stand? FMCSA's Safety Measurement System (SMS) determines an overall BASIC status for each motor carrier based upon roadside inspection results that are reflected as a percentile rank and/or prior investigation violations. This information can be seen by logging into the **SMS Website (https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/sms/)**. Once logged into the SMS Website, a motor carrier with safety compliance problems in the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC will see a warning symbol in that BASIC. You can also view the records of your company's crashes and request a review of any records you think are inaccurate through DataQs. Violations of the regulations related to the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC raise the percentile rank, which indicates lower safety compliance and may lead to safety interventions such as warning letters or investigations.

What documents associated with this BASIC should motor carriers keep? If an investigation is conducted, Safety Investigators (SIs) may request from motor carriers these types of documents: records of verified positive controlled substances test results, documentation of refusals to take required alcohol and/or controlled substances tests, and driver evaluations and referrals. Motor carriers should keep these documents as required by the FMCSRs, and know that SIs may use them to help determine whether the motor carrier has any safety performance issues.

How can motor carriers and their drivers improve safety performance in the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC?
Drivers should understand the regulations related to the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC and how to comply with them. The Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC is based on the regulations that require motor carriers to implement a controlled substance/alcohol testing program in accordance with 49 CFR Part 382. Employers should ensure that drivers understand that staying drug-free and alcohol-free while driving for their motor carriers is not just important for safety – it's the law.

Motor carriers should educate their drivers about how to comply with the FMCSRs and how it impacts the carrier's percentile rank in the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC. Motor carriers should know they are accountable for the safety performance of their drivers and are responsible for educating their drivers about the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC.

Motor carriers should know that violations related to the Controlled Substances/Alcohol BASIC adversely affect SMS results for 24 months; time and/or clean inspections with no Controlled Substances/Alcohol violations can improve motor carriers' BASIC percentile ranks. Also, they should check out the "What can a motor carrier do to improve?" section of the SMS Information Center for answers to commonly asked questions about safety performance.