

Transport Topics **Online**

FMCSA to Add Miles Traveled to CSA Crash-Risk Calculation

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ARLINGTON, Va. — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, responding to trucking industry concerns, will change the way it calculates a fleet's crash risk under CSA 2010, said Administrator Anne Ferro.

The change — using vehicle miles traveled in addition to the number of trucks a fleet owns to calculate the risk factor — addresses a major trucking industry concern about the new safety monitoring system.

Ferro said June 10 at a National Industrial Transportation League forum that FMCSA will build in “a blended rate of VMT and power units” as part of its risk formula.

The reasons for the change, she said, were recommendations from the agency's state enforcement partners, as well as concerns expressed by industry executives. CSA is the new safety program currently being phased in by the agency.

At the same meeting, Tim Lynch, American Trucking Associations senior vice president for federation relations and strategic planning, said the group has “argued the VMT is the better denominator since it shows much better the actual risk factors and element of exposure.”

For example, Lynch said, one of ATA's smaller member companies reported that “by using VMT [to calculate their CSA score], they continue to maintain an excellent safety rating.” However, when using just the number of trucks the company owned, “this motor carrier had a significantly lessened safety rating.”

As initially envisioned, the CSA 2010 model placed fleets in five brackets, or peer groups, against whose members they would be ranked with regard to various safety violations.

The five brackets ranged from five or fewer trucks at the low end to more than 501 trucks at the high end — meaning the smaller the carrier, the larger the relative effect of a crash on its rating.

Ferro didn't say when FMCSA would make its new formula public, but said the agency was close to finishing its work.

“We'll be finished with validating that approach before the summer is over,” she said, but added that the best opportunity to review the new algorithm likely would be during the comment period for the agency's planned fitness determination rule, which will “decouple” the safety rating from the compliance review.

Ferro told reporters that rule would be published “between December 2010 and February 2011,” as the agency moves forward on its incremental rollout of CSA 2010.

She said the agency planned on “completing the rollout of CSA 2010 in increments to ensure that everybody is on board every step of the way.”

In April, FMCSA announced it was pushing back portions of the new fitness rating system, a schedule Ferro said the agency intends to keep now.

“For two months, carriers have been able to view their data. . . . I can’t say it often enough, if carriers aren’t looking at their data, shame on them,” she said. “By the end of August, they’ll see the rating system, the measurement system and, by the end of the year, the public — that’s the insurance industry, that’s the shipping industry, and everybody else will have access to all that data as well.”

Then, Ferro said, during 2011, “you’ll start to see the phased rollout of the actual intervention processes, state-by-state and carrier-by-carrier.”