



# Understanding the Inspection Selection System

A plain English summary.

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# Understanding the Inspection Selection System (ISS)

*The following is a plain English summary of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Inspection Selection System (ISS). Those interested in reading the full ISS methodology may find it [here](#).*

## Purpose

The Inspection Selection System is designed to help enforcement officials prioritize and select vehicles and drivers for roadside inspections. There are currently more than 14 million regulated vehicles (e.g., trucks) operating in commerce, yet enforcement agencies only have sufficient resources to inspect approximately 3.4 million of them annually. As such, the ISS is used to help prioritize those that are the least safe and compliant.

## High Level Overview

The ISS assigns fleets inspection values (i.e. scores) on a scale of 1-100 based on their compliance with safety regulations and number/severity of crashes. In some cases, fleets are also prioritized for inspection due to the lack of information (e.g. past inspections) available to even assess or confirm their safety condition.

The higher the score, the greater the fleet's prioritization for inspection. FMCSA places fleets in one of three categories based on their scores.

Category	ISS SCORE	Description
Pass	1-49	The fleet should be permitted to bypass the inspection station or be waved through.
Optional	50-74	The fleet may be inspected at the agency's discretion, if they have sufficient resources to do so.
Inspect	75 - 100	The fleet should be inspected.

It is important to note that these are merely recommendations to enforcement agencies. They may choose to select fleets in the "Pass" category for inspection or bypass fleets in the "Inspect" category. In addition, they may choose to select fleets in any of the categories at various rates. For instance, one state agency may select only 50% of the vehicles operated by a fleet in the "Inspect" category while another state may select 100% of them, depending on available resources.

## How Scores are Assigned

ISS scores are based primarily on each fleet's scores in the FMCSA Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program's Safety Management System (SMS). The SMS assesses fleets in seven categories called Behavioral Analysis Safety Improvement Categories (i.e., BASICS). The seven categories/BASICS and examples of violations within them are shown in the following table.

Category/Basic	Violation Examples
Unsafe Driving	Speeding, Following Too Closely, Improper Lane Change
Hours-of-Service Compliance	Exceeding the 11 Hour Rule, False Log
Driver Fitness	Expired Med Card, Driving While Disqualified
Controlled Substances/Alcohol	Use or Possession of Drugs/Alcohol
Vehicle Maintenance	Inoperable Lamps, Flat Tires, Brakes Out of Adjustment
HM Compliance	Improper Placarding, Incomplete Shipping Papers
Crash Indicator	Crashes Resulting in a Fatality, Injury, or Disabling Damage

Fleets are assigned a percentile rank (e.g., a “score”) in each category based on their violation and crash history and how they compare to other fleets - within a group of those of similar size and exposure. For instance, a large fleet with lots of inspections and a score of 76 in the *Vehicle Maintenance* BASIC is in the worst quartile of a group comprised of other large fleets in that category.

FMCSA has assigned “thresholds” in each category to identify fleets that should be subject to an enforcement intervention (generally an on-site audit). In most categories, the threshold is set at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile, meaning carriers in the worst 20% are targeted for intervention. However, the threshold is set lower, at the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile, in the *Unsafe Driving*, *Hours of Service*, and *Crash* categories.

The ISS methodology acknowledges that some BASICS are better addressed during roadside inspections than others. For instance, a fleet with a high *Unsafe Driving* score alone, due to multiple speeding citations, is not one that should be prioritized for roadside inspections as inspectors are unlikely to find additional driving/moving violations at that time. However, a fleet with a high score in the *Vehicle Maintenance* BASIC *should* be inspected since the

inspectors will likely find vehicle defects warranting repair. The following BASICs are those identified as “best addressed at roadside.” For the purpose of this document, we will call these the “BAR” categories (best addressed at roadside).

Category	Best Addressed at Roadside (“BAR”)?	Violation Examples
Unsafe Driving		Speeding, Following Too Closely, Improper Lane Change
Hours-of-Service Compliance	✓	Exceeding the 11 Hour Rule, Log Form and Manner, False Log
Driver Fitness	✓	Expired Med Card, Driving While Disqualified
Controlled Substances/Alcohol	✓	Use or Possession of Drugs/Alcohol
Vehicle Maintenance	✓	Inoperable Lamps, Flat Tires, Brakes Out of Adjustment
HM Compliance	✓	Improper Placarding, Incomplete Shipping Papers
Crash Indicator		Crashes meeting FMCSA’s minimum threshold/definition

Fleets are assigned ISS scores *primarily* on the sum of their BASIC percentiles/scores and the criteria shown below. The fleets are then assigned to specific ISS categories based on these scores.

Category	ISS Score	Criteria
Inspect	75 - 100	If either: A: The fleet is over the thresholds in multiple BASICs with at least one of them “BAR;” or, B: The fleet is over the threshold in the <i>Hours of Service</i> BASIC alone.
Optional	50-74	If the fleet is over threshold in a single BASIC (even if non-BAR)
Pass	1-49	If the fleet is below threshold in all BASICs and the carrier has sufficient data (i.e., inspections) for safety to be verified.

## Other Ways Carriers are Scored in the ISS

Though fleets are primarily assigned ISS scores based on their BASIC percentiles, a small number are prioritized for other reasons based on the following.

- Carriers are also placed in the “Inspect” category if they had been declared “Out of Service” for egregious safety violations; or have been identified as “high risk.” \*
- Carriers are also placed in the “Optional” category if found during a recent compliance review (i.e. audit) to have committed certain violations deemed to be “serious” or for failing to meet certain insurance requirements.
- The ISS also prioritizes those that have little or no data (e.g., too few past inspections) on which to judge their safety condition. Most fleets with insufficient data are placed in the “Optional” category. However, a certain number are randomly selected and placed in the “Inspect” category.

\* Note: A high risk carrier is one that: Has four or more BASICs exceeding the threshold; or has two or more total BASICs exceeding the threshold and one of those BASICs exceeding the threshold is in Unsafe Driving, HOS Compliance; or they have a Crash Indicator percentile  $\geq 85$ .

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