

ICSA Glossary

Trucking is filled with names, terminology and acronyms. Whether complying with government regulations, planning your business or dealing with truck insurance, understanding the jargon is a good first step. Here are some of the more common terms you may come across. Still scratching your head? Give ICSA a call!

[Throughout the ICSA Glossary, terminology shown in bold lettering has its own separate definition. To easily locate any definition, click on the [link](#) to the Table of Contents for the page number.]

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[FMCSA and other common terminology](#)

[ADAS -- Advanced Driver Assistance Systems](#)

A family of technologies, such as AEB, adaptive cruise control systems, lane keeping assist, blind spot warning, camera-based mirror systems, and many others.

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[AEB -- Automatic Emergency Braking](#)

Already available on some trucks, AEB is an advanced technology (ADAS) which NHTSA and FMCSA may require on all new trucks in the future. AEB activates brakes when sensors (such as radar, LIDAR, cameras) detect an imminent threat ahead.

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[AV -- Autonomous Vehicle](#)

A vehicle, car or truck, which does not require the active direction of a driver. There are various levels of automation under discussion, from those which assist drivers, to those where the presence and emergency actions of a driver are intended, to those where there may be no interaction at all with humans.

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[BASICs -- Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories](#)

The seven categories where FMCSA evaluates the safety of motor carriers are:

- Vehicle Maintenance
- Unsafe Driving
- Hours of Service Compliance
- Driver Fitness
- Controlled Substances and Alcohol
- Hazardous Materials Compliance

- Crash Indicator

FMCSA obtains data for these BASICs from vehicle inspection reports, citations and crash reports over the past 24 months. The more recent and more severe a safety event, the more weight it is given. FMCSA considers Hours of Service Compliance, Unsafe Driving, and Crash Indicator as priority BASICs. Motor carriers can challenge the accuracy of reports and citations through the FMCSA DataQs program and can seek to have a crash considered as non-preventable using the FMCSA Crash Preventability Determination Program, part of DataQs.

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CDL -- Commercial Driver's License

The license required by FMCSA regulations to operate a CMV. In order to obtain a CDL, an applicant must pass both skills and knowledge testing geared to the higher standards of CMV operation. Applicants typically begin by obtaining a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) and completing Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) according to federal standards. The actual issuance of CDLs is performed by state governments through their departments of motor vehicles (DMVs), also referred to as state driver licensing agencies (SDLAs).

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C.F.R. -- Code of Federal Regulations

The official citation format for federal regulations of all sorts, shown as (Title no.) CFR (Part no.). FMCSA regulations are found under Title 49.

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CLP – see CDL

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CME – see ME

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CMV -- Commercial Motor Vehicle

A CMV is a truck or truck combination with a gross vehicle weight of 26,001 pounds or more; a bus capable of carrying 16 or more passengers, including the driver; or any commercial vehicle transporting hazardous materials.

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CSA -- Compliance, Safety Accountability

FMCSA's safety evaluation program, CSA looks at the performance of motor carriers in seven BASICs (Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories) and compares that performance to similar carriers, using an algorithm in the Safety Management System (SMS). A similar algorithm is used to assign motor carriers scores under FMCSA's Inspection Selection System (ISS), which advises states as to which CMVs might be pulled into a weigh station for inspection.

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DataQs – see BASICs

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DMV – see CDL

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ELD -- Electronic Logging Device

The device installed on a truck to automatically record time driving (hours of service, HOS), as well as the location of the truck and its operation under special circumstances, such as personal conveyance and yard moves.

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ELDT – see CDL

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E.O. – Executive Order

A directive from the White House, often setting priorities or parameters for actions by federal regulatory agencies.

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FMCSRs -- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations

The motor carrier safety regulations issued by FMCSA. FMCSA also issues Federal Motor Carrier Commercial Regulations, which pertain to the requirements to qualify as an interstate motor carrier, insurance, agents for service and other requirements not directly related to the safety of operations.

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HOS -- Hours of Service

The federal and state regulations governing how long a driver may operate a CMV. Compliance with HOS is also one of the BASICS accorded priority by FMCSA.

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IFTA – International Fuel Tax Agreement

A multi-jurisdictional agreement, now codified in federal law, which apportions truck fuel taxes based on travel, and thus consumption, in states and provinces, regardless of where the fuel is actually purchased or dispensed. IFTA allows motor carriers to meet fuel tax obligations without the need to file multiple tax returns. IFTA status is evidenced by a decal and checked by roadside enforcement.

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IRP – International Registration Plan

A multi-jurisdictional agreement, now codified in federal law, which apportions truck registration fees between states and provinces, thereby allowing trucks to travel without the need to separately register or obtain trip permits away from their base jurisdiction. IRP status is evidenced by a decal and checked by roadside enforcement.

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IRT -- Item Response Theory

A data-intensive approach recommended by the National Academy of Sciences for the improvement of CSA. IRT is intended to bring mathematical validity to what has been seen as arbitrary assessments of fleet safety, but FMCSA has not been unable to collect the data needed.

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ISS – see CSA

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MC number – see FMCSA

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ME (or CME) -- Certified Medical Examiner

A Certified Medical Examiner (ME or CME) is listed on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (National Registry) as a person who can effectively determine if interstate commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers meet FMCSA's physical qualification standards.

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MRO -- Medical Review Officer

A Medical Review Officer (MRO) is a licensed physician who is responsible for receiving and reviewing laboratory results from an employer's drug testing program and evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results.

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PII -- Personally Identifiable Information

Sensitive data that could be used to identify, contact, or locate an individual. Examples of PII include name, driver's license (CDL) number, social security number, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, and biometric records.

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REAL ID

REAL ID is a driver's license issued following enhanced security and background checks. While not required to simply operate a vehicle, a REAL ID replaces a normal driver's license as acceptable identification for boarding domestic airline flights beginning in May 2023. For trucking operations, a REAL ID may become necessary to access certain federal, nuclear and military facilities.

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RODS – Record of Duty Status

RODS is a general term for the records a CMV driver must maintain showing time driving, whether those are electronic logging device (ELD) records or paper logs.

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SDLA – see CDL

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SMS – see CSA

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TS&W (or TSW) -- Truck Size and Weight

Size refers to the overall truck combination length, width, and height, plus the number and dimensions of the combination components, the tractor, and trailer(s). *Weight* goes to the overall (“gross”) weight of the truck combination, plus the weights of axles and axle configurations (e.g., tandem and tridem axles) and the “interior bridge” limits – weight allowance per distances between axles.

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TWIC -- Transportation Workers Identification Credential

A credential required by the Maritime Transportation Security Act for workers who access secure areas of ports, maritime facilities and vessels. TWIC applicants, including truck drivers wishing to access ports, complete a background check and threat assessment administered by TSA.

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UCR -- Unified Carrier Registration Plan and Agreement

Replacing the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) and state-level Public Utilities Commissions/Public Service Commissions (PUC/PSC), Congress created the UCR. The UCR requires annual fees from interstate and international motor carriers, private carriers of property, brokers, freight forwarders and leasing companies. Payment of UCR fees is checked by roadside enforcement.

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UID – Unique (or Universal) Identification Device

Proposed by the law enforcement community, a Unique Identification Device (UID) is an electronic device capable of communicating a unique CMV identification number so that roadside enforcement may query the device and obtain truck and trailer data, potentially including evidence of safety problems or violations.

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U.S.C. -- United State Code

The official citation format for federal statutes, shown as (Title no.) USC (Section no.). Statutes affecting transportation, including motor carriers, are found under Title 49.

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USDOT number – see FMCSA

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VMT -- Vehicle Miles Traveled or Vehicle Mileage Tax

Vehicle miles traveled is, simply, distance of operation. Vehicle mileage tax, on the other hand, is a tax directly on that distance traveled, as compared to a tax on fuel consumed.

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Federal government departments, offices and regulatory agencies

CDC -- see HHS

This Cabinet-level department covers all areas of transportation and all modes of transport – truck, bus, rail, maritime, air, pipeline, transit. Under its umbrella, the DOT has regulatory agencies, which set the federal rules for each mode of transportation and for the building and maintenance of transportation infrastructure – roads, bridges, tracks, pipelines, ports, airports. The phrase “DOT-regulated” is a catch-all term for rules issued by one of the DOT’s regulatory agencies. Trucking commonly deals with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and, for hazardous materials carriers, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). Trucking relies on the roads and bridges whose construction and maintenance are overseen by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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“DOT-regulated” – see DOT

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FDA – see HHS

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FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

The federal regulatory agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or USDOT) which, working through state-level departments of transportation, distributes federal highway taxes and, oversees the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. The FHWA standards to which those roads and bridges are built and the technologies incorporated into them impact many aspects of trucking.

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FMCSA -- Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration

The federal regulatory agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or USDOT) whose mission is to “reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.” Working with state-level departments and commercial vehicle law enforcement, FMCSA regulates who can operate in interstate commerce (USDOT number), who can charge for their services (MC number), what prospective truck and bus drivers must first learn (Commercial Learner’s Permit, CLP), how truck and bus drivers are licensed (Commercial Driver’s License, CDL), and the many regulations, such as hours of service limits (HOS), motor carriers, bus companies and their drivers must follow in the interest of highway safety (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, FMCSRs). FMCSA then evaluates the safety of each interstate operator (see Compliance, Safety, Accountability, CSA) and can levy fines and penalties and ultimately prohibit a motor carrier from interstate operation.

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HHS -- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

A Cabinet-level department that includes departments such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). FMCSA has issued several waivers of hours of service (HOS) regulations in response to emergency declarations based on the findings of HHS agencies. On an ongoing basis, trucking pays closest attention to the actions of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA is responsible for the scientific and technical requirements that, by law, all DOT agencies like FMCSA must follow in regulating drug and alcohol tests, including urinalysis, oral fluids testing and hair testing.

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ICC -- Interstate Commerce Commission

Abolished by Congress in 1996, the ICC previously oversaw the economic regulation of trucking and railroads. For trucking, most ICC functions were transferred to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), with minor portions going to the Surface Transportation Board (STB).

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[NHTSA -- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)

The federal regulatory agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or USDOT) which sets manufacturing standards for all new cars and commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) – trucks and buses. For example, if Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) is required for trucks in the future, NHTSA would set the technical standards and require AEB installation on new vehicles, while FMCSA would require the use of AEB on those newer model trucks and its maintenance throughout the vehicle life. For this reason, there are often joint NHTSA/FMCSA rulemakings.

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[NIH – see HHS](#)

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[NTSB -- National Transportation Safety Board](#)

The NTSB is an independent body which investigates accidents of all modes and issues recommended practices. NTSB has no regulatory authority but speaks from a “bully pulpit.”

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[OIRA – see OMB](#)

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[OMB -- Office of Management and Budget](#)

OMB is an executive branch office under the White House, which oversees the administrative performance – budgeting and spending – of all federal agencies. OMB also sets out the policy priorities that federal regulatory agencies are directed to follow. An arm of OMB, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), reviews all significant federal rulemakings and information collection. Major FMCSA or NHTSA rulemakings, for example, at one step in the process are said to be “under review by OIRA.”

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[PHMSA -- Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#)

The federal regulatory agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT or USDOT) which regulates the transportation of hazardous materials and energy by all modes of transport, but with an emphasis on pipelines. Motor carriers which transport certain hazardous materials must file a Certificate of Registration with PHMSA and complete hazardous materials security awareness training, as part of obtaining a Hazardous Materials Safety Permit from FMCSA.

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[SAMHSA – see HHS](#)

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[STB -- Surface Transportation Board](#)

The Surface Transportation Board is an independent federal agency, the successor agency to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), which was abolished in 1996. STB is charged with the economic regulation of various modes of surface transportation, primarily freight rail, but retains some limited role over motor carrier collective ratemaking and household goods carriers.

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[TSA -- Transportation Security Administration](#)

The enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), TSA is best known for screening passengers and baggage at airports and the development of the REAL ID, but TSA also issues the TWIC and has security oversight over all surface transportation modes, including trucking.

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[Rulemaking terminology](#)

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[APA -- Administrative Procedure Act](#)

The federal statute that sets the steps any rulemaking must follow to become a federal regulation. APA emphasizes notice of intended regulatory actions through publication in the Federal Register and the requirement that regulatory agencies request and consider public comments.

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[Federal Register](#)

The official government publication of all federal rules, proposed rules, and public notices. Published every weekday, except federal holidays.

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[ICR -- Information Collection Request](#)

Before any federal agency can require the public to provide data or other information, it must get approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the terms of the Paperwork Reduction Act. The information may be data needed by FMCSA, or other agencies, to justify or administer a new regulation. ICRs are published in the Federal Register. Public comments on the cost and necessity of the information are requested.

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[NPRM -- Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)

Under the terms of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), an NPRM is the step where the regulatory agency shares its actual intended regulation and asks for public comment. An NPRM must contain “(1) the time, place, and nature of public rulemaking proceedings; (2) reference to the legal authority under which the rule is proposed; and (3) either the terms or substance of the proposed rule or a description of the subjects and issues involved.” Prior to publishing an NPRM in the Federal Register, a regulatory agency may first publish an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM), in which the agency tests out a proposal or solicits ideas before it drafts its NPRM. Similarly, if the agency gathers more information or faces changed circumstances, it may publish a Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (SNPRM) reflecting proposed changes in the NPRM. At every stage, public comments are requested.

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[SNPRM – see NPRM](#)

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[Truck insurance terminology](#)

[Auto Liability \(AL\)](#)

Insurance that protects an insured from claims arising from injury or damage to others in the event of an accident.

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[Bill of Lading \(BOL\)](#)

A transportation document that serves as the contract of carriage along with any other conditions between a shipper and a transportation provider.

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Bobtail insurance

Owner-operator coverage specifically for the tractor and typically required under a Contractor-Carrier Lease Agreement. Also see Non-Trucking Liability Insurance (NTL).

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Cargo Insurance (CG)

A commercial trucking insurance policy designed to cover cargo (loads) during transit. It is important to verify exclusions and warranties when purchasing cargo insurance.

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Carrier Liability

A common carrier or trucking company will be held liable for all shipment loss, damage, and delay other than an act of God, public authority/enemy, shipper, or the product itself.

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Claim Reserve

Money that is set aside for the future payment of a loss event that has occurred (aka incurred loss) that has not yet been settled. The reserve is an estimate based on the general or specific details of an accident or loss event. An appropriate amount, adequate to cover all the indemnification and expenses, is used for the reserve.

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Contingent Cargo Insurance

A contingent insurance policy often held by freight brokers that will defend against and pay settlements per the terms of a policy if the primary cargo policy held by the trucking company or single-truck operator fails to pay a claim.

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Excess Motor Trucking Cargo

A commercial trucking policy that provides additional limits of coverage intended to apply in the event that primary cargo coverage has been exhausted. Example: \$250,000 primary and \$100,000 excess for a \$350,000 total limit on cargo coverage. Excess typically follows the same coverage terms as the primary limit policy.

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Excess Insurance Policy

Comparable to “Umbrella Insurance,” excess provides more limits over one line of the primary coverage. The excess would be over one coverage line, like Auto Liability (AL) or General Liability (GL). Unlike an Umbrella, it is not over multiple lines of coverage. Excess typically follows the same coverage terms as the primary limit policy.

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General Liability Insurance (GL) (aka Commercial General Liability – CGL)

A business insurance policy that provides coverage for other claims or incidents that are not related to the direct operation of an auto/truck. Slander, libel, injuries to visitors on the premises, property damage by employees on the premises of others, and contractual lawsuits are some examples where GL may respond to defend and indemnify as required. This has become a common requirement in transportation contracts and a standard in most landlord or property management company agreements. This coverage has a per-occurrence and an aggregate limit.

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Hired & Non-Owned Liability

Coverage for bodily injury and property damage caused by a vehicle the carrier hires (including rented and loaned vehicles) or coverage caused by non-owned vehicles (owned by others, including employees and contractors).

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Insurance

A practice or arrangement by which a company or government agency provides a conditional agreement of compensation for specified loss, damage, illness, or death in return for payment of insurance premium.

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Insurance Quote

A process through which a licensed insurance agent notifies a motor carrier of what his or her insurance coverage will cost.

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Loss runs:

Forms issued by insurance companies to track the date, type, and descriptions of insurance losses of the insured.

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Managing General Agent (MGA)

A business contracted by an insurance company to serve as an intermediary to obtain insurance clients from independent agents. The MGA may handle underwriting, policy service, and other duties under the agreement.

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MCS 90

An FMCSA-required endorsement to a commercial trucking coverage for compliance with sections of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980.

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Motor Truck Cargo Insurance

Commercial transportation insurance to cover the commodity or cargo hauled by a motor carrier.

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Motor Vehicle Report (MVR)

Referred to as a driving record, this is issued by each state and shows information related to driver licenses, including traffic violations.

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National Motor Freight Classification (NMFC code)

A tariff utilized to describe and classify commodities into like classes.

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Non-Owned Trailer Coverage -- Physical Damage

Comprehensive/collision coverage to a non-owned trailer while attached to a covered (scheduled) power unit on an active policy.

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Non-Preventable Accident (aka Not-Preventable Accident)

A vehicular mishap where a driver, exercising normal judgment and foresight, could not have foreseen the possibility of the accident that in fact occurred, and could not have avoided it by taking steps within his/her control.

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Non-Trucking Liability Insurance (NTL)

A policy or an endorsement that provides coverage when the truck is not under dispatch and/or is being utilized for personal use. Example: the truck is not generating revenue miles or advancing the business interests of the lessee motor carrier.

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On-Hook Coverage

Insurance to cover a vehicle being towed by a tow truck.

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Peril

A specific risk or cause of loss covered by an insurance policy.

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Physical Damage Insurance (PD or APD)

Insurance that covers the truck and/or trailer if damaged or stolen. Coverage must be specific to perils covered by the insurance policy. Typically known as the Comprehensive and Collision Coverage for a vehicle.

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Preventable Accident

A vehicular mishap where a driver, exercising normal judgment and foresight, could have foreseen the possibility of the accident that in fact occurred, and avoided it by taking steps within his/her control which would not have risked causing another kind of mishap. This includes when the driver or CMV was legally prohibited from operating at the time or location of the crash, and includes a post-crash inspection report showing there was an out-of-service (OOS) violation.

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Semi-Truck Insurance

Commercial insurance designed for trucking companies.

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Transportation Risk

The inherent risk involved with a transportation or logistics activity.

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Transportation Risk Specialists

Transportation experts with knowledge and experience in the trucking and logistics marketplace.

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Trucking Auto Liability

Auto liability (AL) for commercial trucking insurance that is required by FMCSA. The minimum required limit is \$750,000. Most shipping contracts list \$1,000,000 as the minimum limit requirement. Certain commodities, as outlined on the MCS-90, require \$1 or \$5 million in Auto Liability (AL) limits.

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Truck Insurance

Commercial auto insurance for motor carriers.

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Umbrella Insurance

Insurance coverage that increases the limit of the primary policy(ies). Protects the named insured in a catastrophic event. Required in certain contracts. Typically provides excess limits over Auto Liability (AL), General Liability (GL), and Workers Compensation (WC). This coverage would pay up to the limits provided after the primary limit has been fully exhausted. The coverage terms typically follow the language and terms of the primary limit policy(ies).

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Warehouse Legal Liability

Coverage for property that the insured takes possession of and stores at a warehouse facility.

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Workers Compensation Insurance

Coverage for people when injured or become ill at work. This is state-mandated coverage, and the wage and medical benefits vary by state. Medical expenses, lost wages, rehabilitation costs, death benefits, and employer's liability are the primary coverages provided. Coverage can apply to employees and contractors who work for the named insured.

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