

"We're trying to bring a whole new mindset to safety," says Wes Davis, CFO at Big M Transportation. "We want everyone thinking about safety constantly. It's not just about getting that load there on time."

Big M, a dry van carrier headquartered in Blue Mountain, Mississippi, has around 300 drivers on the payroll. Drivers are often out on the road for 10-14 days at a time and sometimes as long as 3 or 4 weeks.

"We were having too many unsafe driving incidents," Davis says. "It was an issue, so we decided that we needed to do something about it. We hired a new safety director, Benton Elliott and expanded our safety department. Under Benton's leadership, we've taken several steps to upgrade our safety and compliance practices."

#### Safety Training for New Drivers

"New drivers get trained on safety from the start," Davis says. "We take new drivers from driving schools and put them through a rigorous training program. The trainees work with expert trainers for a minimum of six weeks. If they need it, they continue with the initial training for up to eight or ten weeks. Then they have to pass a road test."

# **Vehicle Inspections**

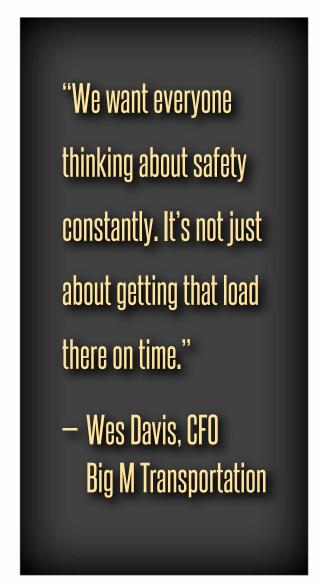
Big M also gives special attention to ensuring that every truck is in good shape before it goes out on the

road. "We run a safety lane here in our shop," Davis says. Every truck goes through the safety lane before it leaves and when it comes back. "Our shop checks the truck out completely from front bumper to back trailer bumper."

Technicians check the tire pressure and tread depth, all of the lights, and everything on each truck to ensure DOT compliance. "We actually welcome the DOT in," Davis says. "They come in a few times a month and do inspections on the property."

### **Hair Follicle Testing**

Even though drug use by drivers has not been an issue for Big M, they want to make sure it doesn't become one. Out of concern that there might be ways to cheat on the DOT's urine test, Big M began using hair follicle testing. "Every new hire does the hair follicle test along with the DOT urine test," Davis says. "We're planning to use the test on all of our drivers eventually."



## **Speed Gauge**

Speed Gauge software works by collecting GPS location data from the mobile comm unit, speed data from the engine ECM, and speed limit data from the mapping system. "If a driver goes five miles an hour over the speed limit, Speed Gauge pings him and lets us know by sending us an immediate e-mail," Davis says.

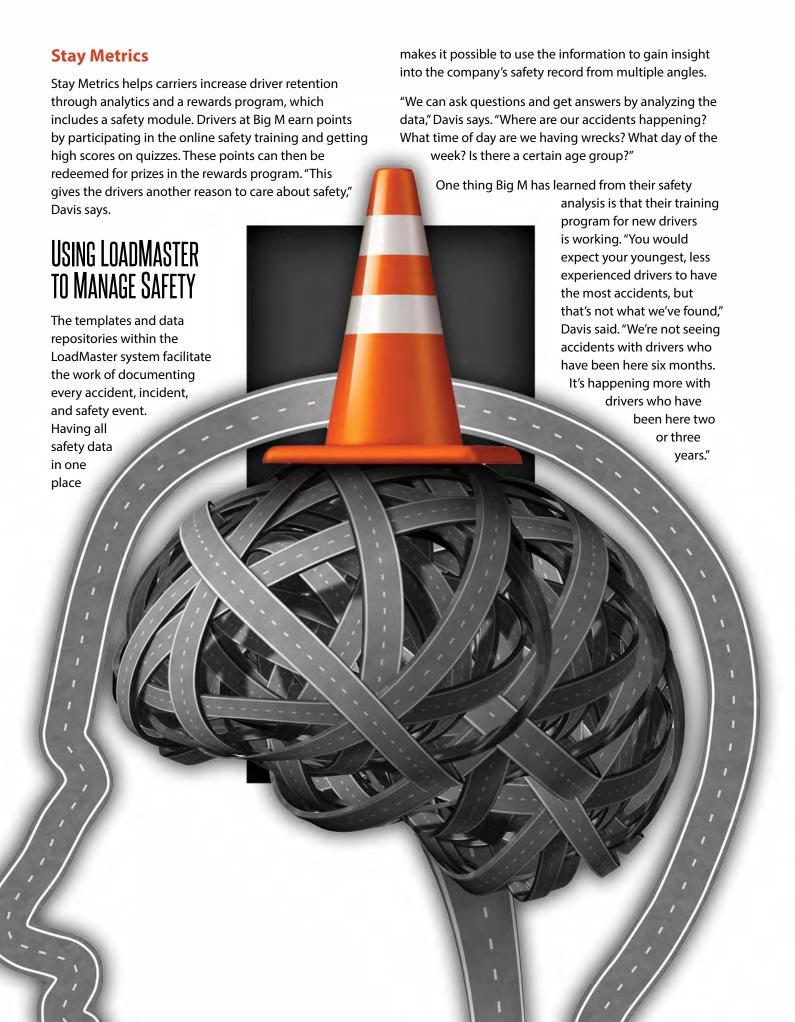
The results have been dramatic. "We've cut our instances of speeding by more than half. We were at around 300 per week and now it's around 130 or 140 per week, and it's continuing to go down."

#### **DriveCam**

Almost the entire Big M fleet is now equipped with DriveCam video event recorders. There are two cameras, one facing out to record everything in front of the truck and one facing in to record the actions of the driver in the cab. The

cameras record constantly, but video is captured only when triggered by an event, such as hard braking, sudden acceleration, swerving, or a collision.

"We'd had several accidents that could have been major lawsuits, but the video has proved that the driver wasn't at fault," Davis says. If incidents occur where the video reveals that drivers were distracted, following too close behind another vehicle, or in some way not driving safely, the drivers will be coached on how to improve.



# IMPROVED SAFETY BENEFITS EVERYONE

For the most part, drivers have responded well to the new safety initiatives. "We've lost a few drivers," Davis says, "but if a driver isn't driving safely, we don't want him driving for us anyway."

When carriers succeed with improving safety, everyone wins. "These efforts aren't just about the business. Safety is in the driver's interest. Good scores make drivers more valuable. It works both ways."



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