



BIG M TRANSPORTATION FOSTERS A NEW MINDSET ON SAFETY

TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN CARRIER USES
MULTIPLE TOOLS TO ACHIEVE SAFETY GOALS

BY WES DAVIS, CFO, BIG M TRANSPORTATION

"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.

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Stay Metrics

Stay Metrics helps carriers increase driver retention through analytics and a rewards program, which includes a safety module. Drivers at Big M earn points by participating in the online safety training and getting high scores on quizzes. These points can then be redeemed for prizes in the rewards program. "This gives the drivers another reason to care about safety," Davis says.

USING LOADMASTER TO MANAGE SAFETY

The templates and data repositories within the LoadMaster system facilitate the work of documenting every accident, incident, and safety event. Having all safety data in one place

makes it possible to use the information to gain insight into the company's safety record from multiple angles.

"We can ask questions and get answers by analyzing the data," Davis says. "Where are our accidents happening? What time of day are we having wrecks? What day of the week? Is there a certain age group?"

One thing Big M has learned from their safety analysis is that their training program for new drivers is working. "You would expect your youngest, less experienced drivers to have the most accidents, but that's not what we've found," Davis said. "We're not seeing accidents with drivers who have been here six months. It's happening more with drivers who have been here two or three years."



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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