Read Your Own SMS Profile

What you're about to look at is what the auditor already looked at.

READ-DO. Follow it top to bottom like a recipe, not from memory. Steps 1 and 8 are the two that get skipped: the PIN because it waits on the mail, and the calendar entry because the file looks the same the day you close it.

> **PAUSE POINT. Before you type your DOT number in.** Get something to write on. This walk produces one written list and one calendar entry, and those are the only two things you keep from it.

1. **Go to the SMS site** (ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/SMS) and search your USDOT number. No login needed for the public view; request/register for your carrier PIN to see the full non-public detail. Request the PIN today and keep going; the public view carries everything in steps 2 through 8, so nothing below waits on the mail.
2. **The seven BASICs**: read yours left to right. A percentile is not a grade: it compares you to carriers with similar inspection counts. Higher is worse. Note which BASICs show a percentile at all (few inspections can mean no score; that's not the same as a good score).
3. **Find the intervention thresholds**. The line where FMCSA starts paying attention differs by BASIC and carrier type. Mark any BASIC at or near its line: that's what a letter would be about.
4. **Open your inspection list.** Every roadside inspection from the last 24 months, every violation, every out-of-service. This is the raw feed. Look for: repeat violation types (a pattern is a system gap, and system gaps are fixable), one truck or one driver over-represented (a targeted fix), and anything that's simply wrong (see step 6).
5. **Check your crash list**: recordable crashes, regardless of fault.
6. **Write down anything that's simply wrong** (wrong truck, wrong date, a violation dismissed in court) and don't fight it yet. That's the DataQs pass in Chapter 10, and it runs on documents. Bad data ages out slowly, so file where you hold a document and skip where you don't.
7. **Look yourself up on SAFER**, the public snapshot the person deciding whether to load you is reading. Your SMS profile is the file an investigator opens. This is the one a broker opens, and they aren't the same page.
8. **Calendar it.** Fifteen minutes, first Monday of every month, same walk. Your profile changes every time an inspection uploads; audit-proof carriers are never surprised by their own file.

What done looks like: you know your worst BASIC, why it's your worst, and whether anything on the list is challengeable, and next month's check is on the calendar.

Eight steps, and none of them fix anything. This page is the reading; the fixing is Chapters 3 through 8, and the challenging is Chapter 10.