



## Data & Insights from FMCSA’s New Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse July 2020

By Scopelitis Transportation Consulting LLC, Regulatory Consultants to Spireon

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse is providing more than just a great way to help identify and keep disqualified CDL holders off our highways. It’s also providing a treasure trove of data offering insights on important aspects of the trucking industry.

In June 2020, FMCSA began publishing [Monthly Clearinghouse summary reports](#) containing CDL driver violation data that clearly identify the drug of choice among drivers, industry hiring trends, the effectiveness of testing and more.

**Drug Use & The Drug of Choice** - In the first 6 months of Clearinghouse use (January to June--the Clearinghouse was implemented Jan. 6, 2020), more than 25,700 drug and alcohol-related violations were reported. Remarkably, drug-related violations by CMV drivers totaled 25,168, or **98%** of all reported violations. Only 593 alcohol-related violations (or 2% of the total) were reported. As many might expect, marijuana is identified in the Clearinghouse as the drug of choice by CMV drivers, with 12,867 positive tests. This far outpaced cocaine use, with 3,868 positive tests. Amphetamine and methamphetamine use was identified as the substances abused most often after marijuana and cocaine. While these positive test numbers appear large in isolation, it’s important to remember that more than 4.3 million CMV drivers are subject to FMCSA’s drug and alcohol testing requirements. Using this driver number to do the math, *less than one-half of one percent* of drivers have tested positive for drugs and alcohol thus far in 2020.

Substance	# Tests Identified
Not Identified	43
6-Acetylmorphine	137
Amphetamine	2,479
Cocaine Metabolite (BZE)	3,868
Codeine	181
DILUTE	1,130
HYC	500
HYM	443
Marijuana Metabolite (Δ9-THCA)	12,867
MDA	13
MDMA	25
Methamphetamine	2,593
Morphine	215
OXYC	534
OXYM	661
PCP	58
<b>All substances</b>	<b>25,747</b>

**Driver Hiring Trends** - Since January 6, 2020, all carriers that want to hire a CDL holder must first conduct a pre-employment full query to ensure the driver doesn’t have any disqualifying drug or alcohol violations recorded in the Clearinghouse. Data on how many of these queries are

### QUERIES CONDUCTED



Have questions on this or other regulatory topics? Contact Dave Osiecki or Sean Garney of Scopelitis Transportation Consulting LLC at [dosiecki@scopelitisconsulting.com](mailto:dosiecki@scopelitisconsulting.com) or [sgarney@scopelitisconsulting.com](mailto:sgarney@scopelitisconsulting.com)

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conducted each month provides a window into the pace of hiring. In the June report, we can very clearly see the expected COVID-related dip in pre-employment queries, indicating driver hiring slowed in March-May 2020 as a result of the pandemic. June brought some good news with a 28% increase in the number of pre-employment queries. But, since many states are now responding to significant increases in COVID-19 cases by shuttering segments of their economies, we are likely see the impact in next month's data.

**Testing Effectiveness** - The purpose of drug and alcohol testing is to prevent drivers from operating

TEST TYPE	DRUG	ALCOHOL	TOTAL
Pre-Employment	13,413	26	13,439
Refusal	1,751	4	
Positive	11,662	22	
Random	8,553	250	8,803
Refusal	1,404	77	
Positive	7,149	173	

a CMV while impaired. That includes preventing lifestyle drug users from entering into the industry, and discovering drug users that may already be behind the wheel. Here too, Clearinghouse data can be used to make some important observations about testing effectiveness. To date, 53% of all drug violations are from pre-employment tests, far more than the next most effective category, random drug testing, accounting for 34% of positive tests.

**Current & Future Driver Availability** - One of the toughest questions surrounding CDL holder drug testing is what happens to drivers who test positive. Some carriers have a zero-tolerance policy while others provide a second chance to drivers provided they complete the required return-to-duty (RTD) process. Either way, the driver must decide between finding a new job/career or completing a process that involves evaluation by a substance abuse specialist, some type of counseling, and a regimen of follow-up testing. As views on marijuana use shift in our country, especially in states where marijuana use is legal, CDL holders may also wrestle with a philosophical question about whether their driving career violates their sensibilities, and if it's worth it to return.

To date, 23% of disqualified drivers have entered the RTD process. Of those, approximately 70% have either been determined eligible for RTD testing or are again eligible to operate a CMV. While acknowledging that around 75% of disqualified drivers may never return to a career as a truck driver may be a difficult pill to swallow, the numbers aren't as bad as they seem. If the trend continues (COVID notwithstanding), approximately 53,000 drivers will be disqualified in 2020 as a result of drug testing violations. Around 8,500 of these drivers will make it through the RTD process and be requalified. That leaves 44,500 exiting the industry. This begs the question, can the industry replace these drivers, and are we safer and better for losing them? The answer to both questions should be a resounding yes.

FMCSA's Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse is providing benefits beyond driver and highway safety improvement. The insightful data in the Clearinghouse, as reported by FMCSA, is providing industry stakeholders with new information, and an unexpected glimpse into trends, that will pay additional safety dividends over time.