



Highlights of [GAO-06-103](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is responsible for improving commercial vehicle safety and uses education and outreach as part of its efforts. The House report accompanying the fiscal year 2005 Department of Transportation (DOT) appropriations bill asked GAO to report on FMCSA's education and outreach programs to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. GAO (1) describes FMCSA's education and outreach programs and how they relate to FMCSA's goals (2) identifies the extent to which FMCSA has evaluated its education and outreach programs and (3) describes the extent to which FMCSA's education and outreach programs are effective.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Transportation direct the FMCSA Administrator to describe the link between education and outreach programs and agency strategic objectives and evaluate the extent to which educational information and safety audits are helping new carriers learn FMCSA requirements. GAO provided a draft of this report to DOT for its review and comment. FMCSA officials commented on the link between its education and outreach programs and its overall goals. Based on FMCSA's comments, GAO acknowledged FMCSA's comments and clarified the recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-103](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-103).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834 or at [siggerudk@gao.gov](mailto:siggerudk@gao.gov).

# FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

## Education and Outreach Programs Target Safety and Consumer Issues, but Gaps in Planning and Evaluation Remain

### What GAO Found

FMCSA's education and outreach programs—New Entrant, Non-Entrant, Motor Coach, Safety Belt, and Household Goods—target different audiences, including the motor carrier industry, commercial vehicle drivers, and the public. Total funding for these programs in fiscal year 2005 was \$36.3 million; the largest share (about \$33 million) went to the New Entrant program, which is designed to inform newly registered motor carriers (new entrants) about motor carrier safety standards and regulations to help them gain compliance with FMCSA requirements. FMCSA uses many approaches, such as direct contact with carriers, media campaigns, distributing printed materials, and establishing Web sites to provide information to target audiences. FMCSA has not described how its education and outreach program activities link expected changes in attitudes and behavior to broader goals, such as DOT's strategic objective of reducing transportation-related fatalities. FMCSA officials state that the education and outreach activities and programs link to agency goals at a high level, but this was not evident from our review, with the exception of the Safety Belt program. FMCSA has used a logic model as a tool in other programs to show the relationship between program activities and broader goals.

FMCSA has begun some evaluations of its education and outreach programs, and plans other evaluations of these programs. However, although FMCSA's New Entrant program has existed for over 2 years, FMCSA has no plans to evaluate its New Entrant program until 2008. Thus FMCSA has no information on whether information on its safety requirements, provided through the Education and Technical Assistance package or during New Entrant safety audits—targeted toward truckers newly entering the industry—effectively communicate information to new entrants. This lack of evaluation makes it difficult to determine the impact the education portion of the New Entrant program has on commercial motor vehicle safety.

Since FMCSA currently has little information on how its programs have affected attitudes and behavior, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of FMCSA's effort. However, the designs of two programs appear to follow theories and research regarding media campaigns, which are intended to influence decision making about safety. Research and behavior theory suggest that for some types of programs—such as DOT's Click It or Ticket program, which is designed to increase safety-belt use by passenger car drivers—enforcement linked to education can improve results, and FMCSA has indicated it is linking some education and outreach programs to enforcement efforts, where appropriate. Finally, motor carrier association officials whom we spoke with stated that, in their view, FMCSA is doing some positive things in its education and outreach activities. A public safety group stated that FMCSA followed reasonable approaches in starting its education and outreach efforts; however, they would like to see more information on program effectiveness to help FMCSA refine the programs.