



Highlights of [GAO-09-85](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Numerous incidents around the world have highlighted the vulnerability of commercial vehicles to terrorist acts. Commercial vehicles include over 1 million highly diverse truck and intercity bus firms. Within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has primary federal responsibility for ensuring the security of the commercial vehicle sector, while vehicle operators are responsible for implementing security measures for their firms. GAO was asked to examine: (1) the extent to which TSA has assessed security risks for commercial vehicles; (2) actions taken by key stakeholders to mitigate identified risks; and (3) TSA efforts to coordinate its security strategy with other federal, state, and private sector stakeholders. GAO reviewed TSA plans, assessments, and other documents; visited a nonrandom sample of 26 commercial truck and bus companies of varying sizes, locations, and types of operations; and interviewed TSA and other federal and state officials and industry representatives.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that TSA develop a plan and time frame for completing risk assessments, develop performance measures that assess the effectiveness of federal commercial vehicle security programs, fully define stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and assess its coordination efforts. DHS concurred with our recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, [click on GAO-09-85](#). For more information, contact Cathleen Berrick at (202) 512-3404 or berrickc@gao.gov.

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SECURITY

Risk-Based Approach Needed to Secure the Commercial Vehicle Sector

What GAO Found

TSA has taken actions to evaluate the security risks associated with the commercial vehicle sector, including assessing threats and initiating vulnerability assessments, but more work remains to fully gauge security risks. Risk assessment uses a combined analysis of threat, vulnerability, and consequence to estimate the likelihood of terrorist attacks and the severity of their impact. TSA conducted threat assessments of the commercial vehicle sector and has also cosponsored a vulnerability assessment pilot program in Missouri. However, TSA's threat assessments generally have not identified the likelihood of specific threats, as required by DHS policy. TSA has also not determined the scope, method, and time frame for completing vulnerability assessments of the commercial vehicle sector. In addition, TSA has not conducted consequence assessments, or leveraged the consequence assessments of other sectors. As a result of limitations with its threat, vulnerability, and consequence assessments, TSA cannot be sure that its approach for securing the commercial vehicle sector addresses the highest priority security needs. Moreover, TSA has not developed a plan or time frame to complete a risk assessment of the sector. Nor has TSA completed a report on commercial trucking security as required by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act (9/11 Commission Act).

Key government and industry stakeholders have taken actions to strengthen the security of commercial vehicles, but TSA has not assessed the effectiveness of federal programs. TSA and the Department of Transportation (DOT) have implemented programs to strengthen security, particularly those emphasizing the protection of hazardous materials. States have also worked collaboratively to strengthen commercial vehicle security through their transportation and law enforcement officials' associations, and the establishment of fusion centers. TSA also has begun developing and using performance measures to monitor the progress of its program activities to secure the commercial vehicle sector, but has not developed measures to assess the effectiveness of these actions in mitigating security risks. Without such information, TSA will be limited in its ability to measure its success in enhancing commercial vehicle security.

While TSA has also taken actions to improve coordination with federal, state, and industry stakeholders, more can be done to ensure that these coordination efforts enhance security for the sector. TSA signed joint agreements with DOT and supported the establishment of intergovernmental and industry councils to strengthen collaboration. TSA and DOT completed an agreement to avoid duplication of effort as required by the 9/11 Commission Act. However, some state and industry officials GAO interviewed reported that TSA had not clearly defined stakeholder roles and responsibilities consistent with leading practices for collaborating agencies. TSA has not developed a means to monitor and assess the effectiveness of its coordination efforts. Without enhanced coordination with the states, TSA will have difficulty expanding its vulnerability assessments.