PRISM News

Hot Topic – PRISM Snags Name Changers!!

We have known for some time that the PRISM program's unique link to vehicle identification numbers (VINs) is the single most effective tool to catch the so-called "chameleon" carriers. In other words, the carriers that simply change names and obtain new USDOT numbers to avoid Federal and State orders, compliance, and fee responsibilities.

The CT DMV recently demonstrated the real-world safety impact of this capability. Two different "chameleon" carriers that had been ordered to cease interstate operations by the FMCSA were caught attempting to register their vehicles under a new name and USDOT number. The press provided excellent positive coverage for the State DMV and the success received quite a bit of attention at FMCSA Headquarters. In fact, it was even highlighted during official FMCSA testimony in a public hearing before the National Transportation Safety Board!

When the carriers tried to register their vehicles, the IRP office detected that the vehicles had previously been associated with an OOS carrier. Research by the IRP office determined the "new" carrier to be the same as the "old" OOS carrier in both cases and denied registration.

FMCSA appreciates your help in gathering as much information as possible about the positive benefits your State may have received by participating in the PRISM program.

This information is very important to the PRISM program, and very valuable information for FMCSA in terms of responding to questions from Congress and the public.

Let us know about your similar successes!

Contact us via the PRISM Technical Support email: PRISMTechnicalSupport@volpe.dot.gov

Timely and Automatic Alert of FMCSA OOS Orders to State DMVs

Automated daily system updates have fed State DMV systems with carriers who have been ordered to cease interstate operations by FMCSA for many years. This has allowed many State DMVs to identify the out-of-service carriers and deny plates at renewal time. However, many State DMVs have sent us a message. That is, they've told the FMCSA PRISM team their registration system might have known a carrier registered in their State was OOS but they did not until renewal. At the same time, they've told us they would have suspended the carrier's license plates long before renewal if they had known the carrier was placed OOS by FMCSA and was registered in their State.

We have heard that message loud and clear. A new PRISM program requirement regarding automated OOS notification has been established. It is now a PRISM requirement to create an automated file or report to alert the IRP registration office management within 24 hours when there are vehicles registered in their State

that are linked to a carrier affected by the issuance or rescission of a Federal OOS order. The reports will serve as a timely prompt for DMV management to contact their local FMCSA office and discuss whether an immediate suspension of license plates is appropriate.

The Procedure Manual addresses this new requirement, and provides sample data fields for the report. Some states have taken creative approaches to implementing this mandate which is fine. States should work with their local FMCSA Division partners in case funding is needed to implement this requirement and are encouraged to contact PRISM Technical support for further assistance.

New States on Board

We are pleased to announce that the States of New York, Montana, and Mississippi submitted letters to FMCSA expressing their intent to move forward on PRISM.

Unified Registration System (URS)

The intent of URS is to take separate information systems within FMCSA and consolidate them into one single system. There have been some encouraging developments on the implementation of this, and we anticipate the publishing of a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking in 2007. FMCSA has held listening sessions with States and gathered information on the potential impacts on the State DMVs that are implementing

PRISM and would like to solicit more States to share their views with FMCSA.

Bar Code Readers - Certified

The PRISM Technical Support group has been working with several bar code scanner manufacturers to expand the list of readers that have been certified to work with the latest USB enabled version of the FMCSA's roadside inspection software, Aspen.

To date, two models available from HHP and PSC have been identified as being able to be configured as terminal type 131 Human Interface Devices (HID). That seems to be the specific setting necessary for a USB scanner to work with Aspen version 2.7.

For further information on the specific scanner model numbers certified for use with Aspen, please email PRISM Technical Support. Also, if anyone has had success using bar code scanners from other manufacturers, let us know. We are always looking to expand the list of known hardware that is compatible with the FMCSA field system applications.

PRISM Web Page

The PRISM documents had been posted on the CVISN website for a couple of years. As of last fall, PRISM has its own document download webpage which can be accessed at:
http://cvisn.fmcsa.dot.gov.

Click on "Documents" then click on the PRISM link on the left hand side. The latest versions of documents currently posted on this page include:
- PRISM Procedure Manual
- PRISM System Specification Manual
- XML Targeted Vehicles Transaction Spec
- Barcode Specifications
- Power-point training manual (Assigning a Carrier Responsible for Safety)

Several new documents will also be added to this web page shortly. These include a data flow chart depicting the availability of data on the various systems used by PRISM, a list of the implementation milestone categories, and a new generic IRP staff training package.

Implementation Reviews

FMCSA is looking for States to volunteer to have an Implementation Review.

The Review covers IRP and Law Enforcement requirements. The major portion of the review involves PRISM IRP requirements and involves the State's IRP staff and usually lasts a day. On the second day we ask for a representative from enforcement to attend to cover the law enforcement requirements. We conclude with a brief summary of findings usually prior to lunch.

What is very important is the fact that we want the review to be as stress free as possible. We can't stress enough that this review is not a "gotcha" type experience or anything to be concerned about. We understand how much effort goes into implementing PRISM and therefore, we view this process as

an educational experience for all that allows us an opportunity to monitor the State's progress with PRISM while at the same time share some of the "best practices" we have observed in other States.

PRISM Data Through NLETS

Since its inception in 1996 enforcement officers have been able to access PRISM Data through NLETS communications facilities. The initial access to PRISM data was inquiries into the PRISM Target File. The Target File contained all carriers that were in the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Process (MCSIP) (i.e. SafeStat Category A-C and OOS Carriers) and all IRP vehicles registered in PRISM States that were assigned to a MCSIP Carrier for Safety.

Enforcement Officers using NLETS could submit a Carrier Status Request (ACQ) using the USDOT Number and if the carrier was in MCSIP, the PRISM Central Site would return a Carrier Status Response (ACR) containing carrier identification data and the MCSIP Step. Officers could also submit a Vehicle Status Request (AVQ) using either the License Plate & Jurisdiction or the VIN and if the vehicle was assigned for safety to a MCSIP Carrier, the PRISM Central Site would return a Vehicle Status Response (AVR) containing IRP Registration data on the vehicle and Carrier identification data for the Carrier Responsible for Safety.

Over the past eighteen months PRISM has taken steps to make major improvements to the access of PRISM data through NLETS.

The AAMVAnet/NLETS Gateway has been converted from a Personal Computer located in the NLETS Operations Center in Phoenix to a mainframe located in Northern Virginia operated for AAMVA (American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators).

The AAMVAnet/NLETS Gateway converts NLETS Inquiry Messages to the AAMVAnet format and forwards the message to the PRISM Central Site. When the PRISM Central Site sends a Response message, the AAMVAnet/NLETS Gateway converts the Response message contents from AAMVAnet format to NLETS format (ACR & AVR) and forwards the Response message to the NLETS Operations Center that forwards it to the requestor.

While PRISM was initially designed to only look for Carriers in MCSIP and Vehicles assigned for Safety to a MCSIP Carrier, the scope has been expanded to now access the SAFER-PRISM database that contains all carrier records.

PRISM modified the Carrier Status Response by placing the Safety Condition at the beginning of the Response Message. The values are

Carrier is targeted

Carrier is not targeted

Carrier is under Federal OOSO

Carrier's registration is suspended/revoked

No carrier data available - target status unknown

There are currently more than 1.4 million active USDOT Numbers. More than 28,000 carriers are in MCSIP. More than 69,000 vehicle records are on the PRISM Target

File. Contact your State Police Communications Officer to find out how to access PRISM Data through NLETS in your state.

Implementation Plan Development

The PRISM Team provides 1.5 day sessions intended to provide a comprehensive overview of PRISM program requirements and on-site technical assistance in developing a PRISM Implementation Plan. Put simply, it is a first step toward moving forward on PRISM and receiving approval to expend PRISM grant funds. During Fiscal Year 2006, the FMCSA PRISM Team conducted these sessions in:

- Oklahoma
- Rhode Island
- Idaho
- Alaska
- Kentucky

To date this year, the team conducted a session in Texas. Please contact the PRISM Team if your State would like to schedule a similar session during FY 2007.

States' Implementation Progress

The PRISM team has developed a list of milestone categories for the implementation of PRISM. These categories designate the progress of the states in their implementation of PRISM. Generally the categories follow the two-year plan states adopt in their approved implementation plan.

PRISM Implementation Status - January 2007
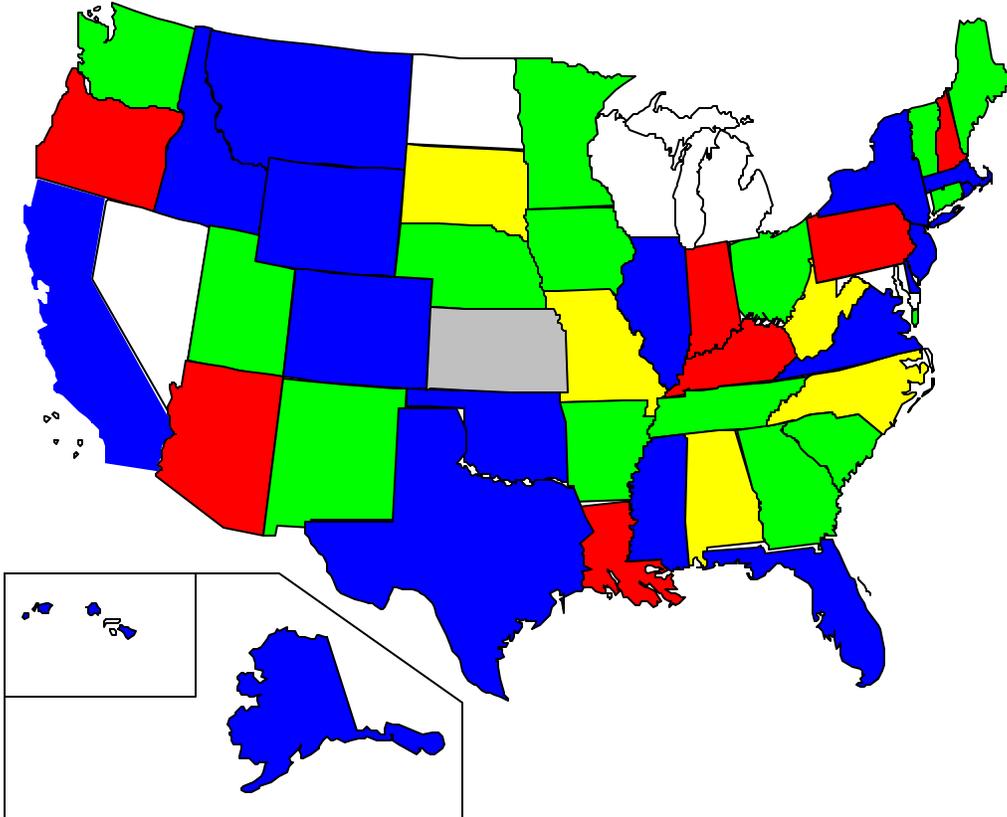
Grant Approval - Blue

Approved PRISM Implementation Plan - Gray

Level 1 - Red
- Collecting/Validating USDOT Number of Carrier Responsible for Safety

Level 2 - Yellow
- Enforcing MCS-150 Update
- Checking Carrier Safety Status
- Submitting Targeted Vehicles to SAFER

Level 3 - Green
- Denying, Suspending, Revoking for Federal OOSO
- Bar Coding PRISM Specs
- Enforcement Stopping Targeted Vehicles