

# IMPROVING NON-FATAL CRASH COMPLETENESS: A CASE STUDY FROM WASHINGTON STATE

FMCSA's safety programs are driven by data, and better data results in safer roads. FMCSA and its State Partners are committed to continuous improvement of data quality through education, analysis, and action. In this case study, learn how collaboration with key partners and online resources from FMCSA helped the State of Washington improve its non-fatal crash reporting process and the quality of the reported data.

FOR INFORMATION ON  
THE NFCC MODIFICATION

Go to >

<http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/dataquality/improve>

## The NFCC Measure

The Non-Fatal Crash Completeness (NFCC) measure is one of nine State Safety Data Quality (SSDQ) measures used by FMCSA to evaluate State-reported data in the Motor Carrier Management Information System (MCMIS). The measure is now easier to understand and more useful following a recent modification.

During a review of the NFCC measure, the State of Washington found their rating to be "Fair" instead of the optimal "Good" rating. The data showed that Washington was reporting more vehicles involved in non-fatal crashes to FMCSA than expected—an indication of a potential problem with Washington's non-fatal crash record reporting.

## An Easy Place To Start

To address the issue of over-reporting non-fatal crash records, Kevin Zeller, program manager for the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) in the State of Washington, accessed the SSDQ website: "We took the suggestion from our FMCSA partners to look at the Continuous Improvement section of the State Safety Data Quality Module and went through the Learn, Review, and Act areas." Mr. Zeller then reviewed the materials provided on the website, including the FMCSA publication *Strategies for Improving Your Non-Fatal Crash Completeness Rating: How to Address Over-Reporting*. The document provided Mr. Zeller with a straightforward process: "I had steps to follow and an easy place to start."

## The Problem

*How to Address Over-Reporting* describes a number of ways officials can improve their State's NFCC rating by examining how crash information is collected, selected, and reported. Under the reporting section, Mr. Zeller found the recommendation to "Assess your State's process for identifying fatal crashes in MCMIS," and saw a potential opportunity to improve. He met with FMCSA divisional staff as well as staff from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the agency that receives and processes the crash reports. Together they found that smaller trucks and vans involved in fatal crashes had been recorded as "non-commercial" on crash reports, even though the vehicles were involved in commerce at the time of each crash. As a result, these fatal crash reports were not identified as FMCSA-reportable crashes and were not entered into MCMIS. Washington was under-reporting vehicles involved in fatal crashes, and because the NFCC measure considers a State's fatal-crash record total to help estimate the number of non-fatal crash records, it appeared the State was over-reporting vehicles involved in non-fatal crashes.

## The Solution

Moving Washington from "Fair" to "Good" was relatively easy. Once the problem had been identified, WSDOT recoded and resubmitted the affected fatal crash reports, causing the number of non-fatal crash reports to be within the expected range.

Now, Mr. Zeller meets once a month with WSDOT to ensure that they stay on top of the issue. Washington will update its training plan to ensure that the vehicles recorded in crash reports are properly identified, including smaller commercial vehicles. Once the training plan is approved, it will be distributed to collision investigation instructors at the Washington State Patrol Academy and the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission.



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## Change Not Always Easy

A 25-year veteran of the Washington State Patrol, Mr. Zeller is not new to change, but he admits that at first he didn't see any room for improvement when he learned about his State's modified NFCC measure results: "Initially, it was sort of a denial phase. We were reporting everything. We believed we were doing everything right."

Ultimately, he realized that investigating the modified NFCC measure rating, engaging key partners such as FMCSA and WSDOT, and reviewing the materials were in the best interest of his State: "Whenever you have to get people to change, the initial reaction is 'no.' But you have to get past that. You have to take a step back, identify an area of concern, and have an open dialog to find out if change is needed."

## Improved Data Quality Means Safer Roads

The modified NFCC measure and related online materials are part of FMCSA's commitment to data quality. These resources help Federal and State officials, like Mr. Zeller and his counterparts in the State of Washington, to quickly identify and address data quality issues. Improved data quality helps FMCSA and the States better allocate enforcement resources that contribute to safer roads.

*"I had steps to follow and an easy place to start."*

– Kevin Zeller

## Feedback/Questions

Send us your questions or comments on the SSDQ methodology by using the

A&I Online Feedback form at:

<http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Feedback/AIFeedback.asp>

Federal and State users may contact their Technical Assistant (TA) directly.



**Guidance is available to improve the accuracy and completeness of your crash data:**

- Strategies to address OVER-reporting non-fatal crash records
- Strategies to address UNDER-reporting non-fatal crash records



## Learn More

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