

A Word From The Woods

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THE FMCSA CLEARINGHOUSE RULE AND TIMBER TRANSPORT

The Alabama Loggers Council recently received information that several of our members had trucks placed “out-of-service” at a roadside inspection due to a violation of Clearinghouse regulations.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) enacted a driver database known as the “Clearinghouse” in July of 2019, but delayed enforcement until January 2020. Since this was at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, we believe that many of our members may have “missed” the roll-out and therefore may not be in compliance with this Federal regulation.

The Clearinghouse is a national database that contains records of Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) holders who have failed drug or alcohol test, as well as those who have refused to take a test. Drivers who are on this list are disqualified from driving until certain “Return to Duty” (RTD) requirements are met.

All trucking companies (even those with only one truck) are required to register with the Clearinghouse. You can do this by going to <https://clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/>. Companies that fail to register may be subject to fines and civil penalties.

After the registration process is completed, trucking companies must check the Clearinghouse before hiring new drivers. They must also check at least once a year to ensure that their current drivers have not failed a drug or alcohol test that they may not otherwise know about.

Drivers should be aware that failed tests (or refusal to take a test) will put their name in the Clearinghouse database, where it will remain for five years. Two failed tests require completion of an RTD program. Since this rule was put into effect, FMCSA has disqualified nearly 90,000 CDL drivers nationwide.

The ALC strongly encourages our logging and trucking members to register with the Clearinghouse. If you have questions, please contact us for clarification or additional information.

