

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105972](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Large trucks and buses move billions of tons of goods and transport millions of people across the United States each year. FMCSA is responsible for reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. One way FMCSA carries out this responsibility is through its complaint website.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes a provision for GAO to review FMCSA's complaint website. This report examines (1) complaint data FMCSA makes public, (2) control activities FMCSA uses to review complaints, (3) how the complaint website follows leading practices, and (4) user outreach for the complaint website.

GAO analyzed data from the complaint website, reviewed applicable statutes and FMCSA regulations, policy, and guidance, compared the complaint website to leading practices for federal websites, and reviewed FMCSA's actions to promote awareness of the complaint website. GAO also interviewed agency officials and representatives of industry associations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making 14 recommendations, including that FMCSA make all categories of its complaint data public as appropriate, update its complaint review guidance, ensure its complaint website fully follows leading practices, and develop an outreach plan for its complaint website. FMCSA agreed with 13 of these recommendations. For the remaining recommendation, FMCSA cited challenges testing the complaint website with external users.

View [GAO-23-105972](#). For more information, contact Elizabeth Repko at (202) 512-2834 or repkoe@gao.gov.

September 2023

MOTOR CARRIER OPERATIONS

Improvements Needed to Federal System for Collecting and Addressing Complaints against Truck, Moving, and Bus Companies

What GAO Found

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), within the Department of Transportation, maintains complaint data submitted against large commercial truck, moving, and bus companies—which are types of motor carriers. GAO found that FMCSA makes some but not all of this complaint data available to the public, which is not consistent with Department of Transportation policy. As a result, FMCSA may be missing the opportunity to improve transparency and collaboration with industry partners.

Types of Vehicles Used by Motor Carriers



Source: Left to right; Stefon Linton/stock.adobe.com, Laura Ballard/stock.adobe.com, Svetlaya/stock.adobe.com. | GAO-23-105972

FMCSA has not designed sufficient controls to help ensure its policy for reviewing complaints related to motor carriers is followed. For example, FMCSA's guidance is organized by seven complaint categories. However, the guidance does not define several key terms, including the complaint categories, or define how the categories align with over 100 possible allegations. Matching the allegation to a category may be challenging without definitions. As a result, FMCSA may not have adequate assurance that staff are consistently applying the appropriate complaint review guidance. Ultimately, this could affect FMCSA's ability to respond to unsafe motor company practices.

GAO also found that FMCSA's public-facing complaint website partially followed leading practices for federal website design and usability. For example, the website works on frequently used web browsers and the content is organized around user-friendly topics, in line with leading practices. However, the complaint website's content is not consistently easy to view on mobile devices. According to FMCSA officials, about half of users access the website on mobile devices. Representatives of industry associations noted that mobile access is particularly important for truck drivers.

FMCSA has conducted some outreach activities for its complaint website, but has not developed a plan to guide these activities. According to GAO's review, FMCSA promotes the website through the "Protect Your Move" education campaign for people who are planning interstate moves. FMCSA's outreach to other audiences—such as truck drivers—has been more limited and all five of the trucking associations GAO interviewed were not aware of such outreach. Without a plan to guide outreach activities, key target audiences may lack awareness of the complaint website, limiting FMCSA's ability to collect motor safety complaints.