

NEWS & INSIGHTS

The New DataQs Procedures: Denuclearize Your CSA Record

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Note: This is the fifth part of a series on denuclearization of trucking accident verdicts. You can read [Part 1 here](#), [Part 2 here](#), [Part 3 here](#), and [Part 4 here](#).

Nuclear verdicts are rarely detonated by the facts of an accident. They are built on a narrative that your company is systemically unsafe. And one of the most powerful raw materials plaintiff attorneys use to build that narrative is your CSA record.

Billboard attorneys use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain your roadside inspections and violation data from

the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) as a matter of routine. Every inspection that incorrectly records a violation, every crash inaccurately attributed to your driver, every data entry error that inflates your safety scores, all of it becomes potential ammunition in the hands of plaintiff counsel building a Reptile Theory case, where jurors are told the defendant is a danger to the community.

On April 16, [FMCSA published the most significant reform](#) of [the DataQs system](#) in years. The new rules mandate an independent, multi-stage appeals process for motor carriers challenging safety data — with binding timelines, state accountability, and a structured path from initial review through reconsideration to final appeal.

This is not a compliance story. It is a litigation defense story

Why It Matters

The connection between your CSA data and nuclear verdict exposure runs through the Reptile Theory framework. Plaintiff attorneys do not need your data to be dramatically bad — they need it to show a pattern. A cluster of inspections with violations, even minor ones, even disputed ones, can be woven into a narrative of systemic disregard for safety.

Under the old DataQs system, challenging inaccurate data was a frustrating, often futile exercise. Reviews lacked independence. Timelines were undefined. States handled challenges inconsistently. Carriers with legitimate disputes had no meaningful appellate process.

The new rules change that. For the first time, carriers have a structured, binding, three-stage appeals process with enforceable timelines, independent reviewers at each stage, and state compliance tied to federal grant funding from the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Administration. The system now has teeth, and carriers who use it aggressively will build a cleaner litigation record.

The Details: What Changed

Three-stage Independent Review: Every challenge moves through Initial Review, Reconsideration, and Final Review, each conducted by reviewers independent of the prior stage. The officer who wrote the citation cannot be the sole decision-maker on whether it was correct.

Binding Timelines: States must open a request within seven days, reach an Initial Review decision within 21 days, a Reconsideration decision within 21 days, and a Final Review decision within 45 days. Compliance is tied to MCSAP grant funding.

State Accountability: The FMCSA will monitor compliance, publish performance data publicly, and incorporate DataQs timeliness into annual MCSAP reviews.

Documented Decisions: Every closed challenge must include the decision-maker's name and title, evidence reviewed, specific reasons for the decision, and instructions on how to appeal.

Extended Lookback Windows: Carriers can challenge inspection data for up to three years and crash data for up to five years.

Implementation Timeline: Training begins now and runs through May. States submit Implementation Plans within 60 days of the April 16 Federal Register publication. The new system is scheduled to go live approximately in mid-September 2026.

What to Watch

Every carrier should audit its current CSA data now, before the new system goes live. Identify disputed inspections and crash records. Build the documentation needed to support challenges. And when the system goes live, file promptly — the 30-day window to escalate from one stage to the next is a hard deadline.

Your safety data does not just sit in the FMCSA system. It flows into discovery in every serious trucking case. If you need guidance in auditing your CSA data, please [contact me](#) or anyone in the [Saxton & Stump Trucking and Commercial Transportation Group](#).

Coming next week, “Denuclearization Series Part 6: The Reptile Theory.”

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