

NEWS & INSIGHTS

Motus is Arriving. Is Your Compliance Ready?

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The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's new Motus registration system is rolling out in Phase II this spring, and every carrier, broker, and freight forwarder in the country will be required to verify their identity and business information when they access the new system for the first time.

Most carriers will treat this as a compliance task. A form to fill out, a system to learn, a box to check before getting back to operations.

That is the wrong frame.

Your FMCSA registration record is not just an administrative file. For the approximately 800,000 existing registrants, it is a document that plaintiff attorneys access in discovery, review for discrepancies, and use to build the narrative that your company operates with systemic disregard for regulatory requirements.

The Motus transition is a required self-audit of that record. Carriers who approach it as a litigation-defense exercise — not just a compliance update — will emerge with a cleaner regulatory profile and one fewer vulnerability in the evidentiary landscape on which nuclear verdict cases are built.

The regulation specifically notes the relationship of this registration to safety analysis. “In general, registration information collected informs prioritization of the (a)gency’s activities and aids in assessing and statistically analyzing the safety outcomes of those activities.”

Why It Matters

The connection between your FMCSA registration record and your litigation exposure runs through [the Reptile Theory framework covered in the DENUCLEARIZATION series](#). Plaintiff attorneys building a systemic failure narrative do not limit their discovery to your safety scores. They pull your full regulatory profile.

Discrepancies in that profile — an outdated principal place of business, a process agent designation that no longer reflects your actual operations, insurance filings that do not match your current authority, authorized portal users who have left the company — are small pieces of a larger pattern argument. None of them is a smoking gun. All of them together paint a picture of a company that does not take its regulatory obligations seriously.

Motus will surface these discrepancies through its identity and business verification process, which FMCSA has built with fraud prevention at the forefront. Discrepancies the system finds need to be resolved. The question is whether you find them first, proactively, or if the system surfaces them reactively.

Proactive carriers will clean their record before Phase II goes live. Reactive carriers discover their gaps in the middle of the transition — and in the middle of active litigation.

What Changed: Motus in Plain Terms

What Motus replaces: The current Unified Registration System (URS) and the FMCSA Portal — the web-based system carriers use to manage registration, access crash and inspection history, and interact with FMCSA systems, including the Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. Both will be disabled once Phase II goes live.

Phase I (already live — December 8, 2025): Supporting companies — BOC-3 filers, insurance and surety companies, and transportation service providers — have been setting up accounts and creating business profiles. If you use a process agent service or a transportation service provider for your FMCSA filings, they are already in the system.

Phase II (second quarter 2026): All regulated entities gain access. This is when carriers, brokers, and freight forwarders will be required to use Motus for new registrations, authority changes, biennial updates, and all other

registration transactions. The current URS will be disabled for new applications.

Identity verification: Every new applicant — and every existing registrant accessing the system for the first time — must complete identity proofing using a smartphone or tablet and a valid government-issued ID. This is not optional.

Business verification: Motus will confirm your company's legal name, principal place of business address, ownership structure, company officials, and compliance status against independent sources. Inaccurate information will be flagged.

The Pre-Phase II Checklist: FMCSA's Own Guidance, Reframed for Defense

FMCSA published its own [pre-transition checklist in the Federal Register](#). Here is each item reframed through the litigation defense lens:

- **Review your registration records for accuracy and make updates now.** Your legal name, principal place of business, ownership structure, and company officials must match the facts about your organization. Discrepancies between your registration and your actual operations are evidentiary vulnerabilities. Fix them before the system's business verification process finds them — and before plaintiff counsel does.
- **Review process agent and insurance filings.** Your BOC-3 process agent designations and your insurance filings must be current and accurate. A lapsed or outdated process agent designation can affect service of process in litigation — and can be presented as evidence of regulatory inattentiveness. Your insurance filings must reflect your actual current coverage and authority.
- **Save a copy of your current records.** FMCSA specifically recommends saving a copy of your existing records to match Motus data for safety and security purposes. Do this. Having a documented baseline of what your record showed before the transition is also useful if discrepancies surface during the verification process.
- **Review your FMCSA Portal authorized users and remove anyone who has left, changed roles, or no longer needs access.** Outdated authorized users in your FMCSA Portal account are a security vulnerability — and they are exactly the kind of organizational gap that plaintiff attorneys point to as evidence of systemic disorganization. Clean the access list before the transition.
- **Prepare for identity verification.** Every person who will access the Motus system for your company will need a valid government-issued ID and a smartphone or tablet for the facial recognition component. Identify who in your organization will need access to the system and ensure they are prepared. An eight-business-day

processing delay applies to paper form submissions during the transition — using Motus directly avoids that delay.

What to Watch

FMCSA has explicitly asked carriers to clean up their records before Phase II goes live. This is rare — federal agencies almost never tell regulated entities to self-audit before a new system is implemented. The fact that FMCSA is making this request reflects how significant the discrepancy problem is expected to be.

For carriers with complex organizational structures — multiple operating authorities, affiliated entities, recent acquisitions, or changes in ownership — the Motus verification process is particularly important. The business verification component will check ownership structure and company officials against independent sources. Organizational changes that have not been reflected in FMCSA records are the most likely sources of discrepancies.

Updates on Phase II timing and additional guidance are being posted by [FMCSA at its Registration Modernization Resources Hub](#).

It's imperative for carriers to be diligent in inspecting their records for the new Motus system since one oversight could cost them millions of dollars in future litigation. If you have questions about Motus or need assistance in inspecting the records, please [reach out to me](#) at any time.

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