

## 7.1 Conclusions

In summary, this synthesis of certification and best practices and self evaluation programs yields the following conclusions.

1. There is a rich and relatively settled set of best practice approaches and processes designed to improve motor carrier safety and reduce crashes and incidents
2. Costs of implementation of best practices by motor carrier firms are generally borne as internal management costs, and the benefits are realized through productivity improvement and reduced safety incidents
3. Although there is limited validation of crash reduction from best practices applications, there are significant indications of improved motor carrier safety performance through best practices applications
4. Interest in use of certification and best practices in alternative compliance schemes is strong in North America and Australian enforcement communities
5. Broad implementation of certification and best practice schemes will require better validation of effectiveness of schemes, and significant incentives from regulatory agencies.

These conclusions suggest further investigation both of the effectiveness of certification and best practices schemes in achieving reduced crashes and safety incidents among motor carriers, and of the potential relationship of the schemes to regulatory regimes. Elaboration of the summary conclusions and a potential approach to this investigation is offered below.

### Best Practice Components – A Common Set of Protocols

A review of the several best practice and self evaluation programs set out in this synthesis suggests that although there are minor differences, there is a common set of prescribed practices among all of the programs and schemes.

In Section 3.2.2 the discussion of insurance considerations related to certification serves as a basic template for any and all of the schemes. In insurance terminology, “exposures” relate to drivers and vehicles. Each exposure area is then reviewed relative to in place management controls. For drivers, the focus is on qualifications and selection, development and training, supervision, incident management, and health and welfare including fatigue management. For vehicles, the focus is on vehicle specifications and selection, inspection, repair, and ongoing maintenance. For both vehicles and maintenance, the industry leading practices incorporate leadership, accountability, measurements, internal reviews and audits, quality controls, and continuous quality improvement. All of these management controls and practices are in common with the core principles of the ISO 9000 process, and are found in the TruckSafe, Canadian Safety Management Systems, NPTC Best Practices, and SafeReturns components.

The commonality of the best practice components suggests that agreement on core protocols of a scheme to test effectiveness, and to potentially use in alternative compliance approaches will not be difficult. However, cost factors – the costs of internalizing management practices – could be an element in building consensus on accepted practices.

#### Need for Evidence of Effectiveness

While there is some evidence that implementation of a formalized best practices scheme will yield improvement in safety performance, it is clear that enforcement agencies will demand stronger evidence that such a scheme will reduce crashes and incidents before embarking on an alternative compliance link to best practices application. Any effort to test effectiveness will require design of an evaluation process incorporating base line data, and definitive measures of performance success. Enforcement officials indicate that while a pilot effort could help yield such information, a broader approach will require clear demonstration of safety benefits, including crash and incident reductions.

#### Interest in Certification and Best Practices/Alternative Compliance Schemes Warrants Further Investigation

Alternative compliance programs such as PrePass and NorPass are evidence of motor carrier enforcement community interest in rewarding carriers with improved safety performance with some exemptions from current regulatory requirements. The CSA 2010 effort by FMCSA is seeking alternatives to current compliance regimes and development of new, more effective operating modes.

Given FMCSA interest in seeking out alternative operating and business models, along with proven benefits of best practice use by safe carriers, the confluence of these factors suggest that both parties could benefit from a collaborative effort to investigate the relationship of best practices and the FMCSA approach to improving motor carrier safety.

#### Validation of Certification/Best Practices Effectiveness and Relationship to Alternative Compliance Programs

The key research need relating to certification and best practices programs is validation of effectiveness of such programs in improving safety and reduction of crash rates and safety incidents. Alternative compliance schemes could provide significant incentives for carriers to adopt best practices, but enforcement officials are seeking stronger evidence of program effectiveness before adopting alternative compliance approaches.