



Fleet Profile & Specs

BY CAROL BIRKLAND | EDITOR-AT-LARGE



Bob Laumann,
Safety Manager
Smoot Brothers
Transportation

Conquering CSA citations

Smoot Brothers Transportation (SBT) was founded in 1988—with one truck—by Mike and Matt Smoot. In 1991, Kenny Smoot, who is now the vice president, joined his brothers in the company. SBT has since grown to more than 50 trucks and can be seen on highways across the entire continental United States and Canada. The fleet currently has approximately twenty owner/operators and leasers on staff. In addition, SBT has created a sister company, Triple S Transportation, with trucks specially outfitted for HAZMAT transport.

Anticipating CSA

In May 2008, prior to the Federal Motor Carry Safety Administration's (FMCSA) rollout of the Compliance

Safety Accountability (CSA) program, the company hired Bob Laumann to head up a new Compliance Safety Accountability "citation avoidance" program.

According to Laumann, "I was ready to retire from 28 years with the Idaho State Police, where I was assigned to the Commercial Vehicle Safety program, involving all types of roadside inspections as well as Safety Audits, Compliance Reviews, etc. A mutual friend, who knew I was looking for work and an opportunity to move from law enforcement into the trucking industry to promote safety, referred me to Smoot Brothers Transportation. At that time, Smoot Brothers Transportation was having some safety compliance issues, which were adversely affecting business. I was hired by Smoot Brothers and

given the assignment to fix the safety issues.”

Laumann knows from his past experiences that every company is different; each has its own unique personality, as well as its own strengths and weaknesses. With that in mind, he notes, “I try to use information learned from my experience in enforcement, and lessons learned from each company and situation to gain understanding to help other companies. My focus from the beginning was identifying issues within the company and with drivers to develop a program that addressed those issues. As is common, the effort required a change in the safety culture of the company management, which then filtered down throughout the company.”

Smoot Brothers currently operates about 60 trucks, 14 of which are owner-operators operating under Smoot Brothers authority. There is one office/yard, located near Brigham City, Utah, and one shop where the majority of maintenance and service work is completed. Laumann discovered that the main areas of concerns that needed to be addressed were equipment maintenance and hours of service compliance.

Focus on inspections

As Laumann started to address some of the maintenance issues, related to fleet trucks and trailers, he emphasized completing and documenting annual inspections every time the units are serviced.

“Technicians were provided additional training, and I personally inspected equipment in the yard. These simple improvements made a dramatic effect on our maintenance, drastically improving safety performance. With the introduction of the CSA program by FMCSA, maintenance needed even more attention,” Laumann says. “We have emphasized driver inspections of equipment, hired technicians to focus especially on trailers, and provided training to those mechanics to help them better identify safety issues.”

To address hours of service issues, the fleet focused on—and placed more emphasis on—log monitoring and compliance. “With paper logs, this can be very time consuming and difficult,” Laumann admits. “We used a computer-assisted program to scan and monitor compliance. We established an incentive program to encourage driver compliance. The incentive program included rewards for violation-free DOT inspections, and for driver’s daily logs that are found to be violation-free as indicated both during DOT inspections and after our own internal audits.”

Getting the word out

Laumann also sent out monthly newsletters that included general safety information, and two lists of drivers, one showing all drivers who had violation-free DOT inspections, and another list showing drivers with DOT violations—and what those violations were. “We developed an incentive program to encourage drivers to be



Smoot Brothers Transportation Tractor Specs

- Tractor model: Peterbilt 386
- Engine: Cummins ISX 600 HP 1850 torque
- Transmission: Fuller RTLO16918B 18-speed
- Driveline: 1810 HD
- Front axle Dana Spicer E13221 13200 lbs.
- Rear axle: Dana Spicer DSP40 40,000 lbs.
- Rear suspension: Peterbilt Flex Air 38000-lb. 52-in. axle spacing
- Power steering: TRW THP60
- Extended life brake shoes
- Brakes: 6S6M anti-lock braking system
- Tires: SmartWay designated 295/85/22.5 front and rear
- Fifth wheel: Holland FW35 24-in. air slide
- Air compressor: WABCO 28.0 CFM
- Air drier: Bendix AD-IS with heater
- Fan Clutch: DM Advantage ON/OFF
- Batteries: Three Paccar Premium 12-volt Dual Purpose Batt2100 cca
- Starter: Paccar 12-volt starter
- Alternator: Paccar 160-amp
- Fuel tank: 26-in., 150-gal. aluminum
- Tractor model: Freightliner Cascadia
- Engine: Detroit 455 HP 1650 torque
- Transmission: DT 12 transmissions
- Starter: Freightliner
- Alternator: Freightliner 160 amp

ready for violation-free DOT inspections by completing thorough pre- and post-trip equipment inspections, and to maintain current log books in compliance with hours-of-service regulations," he says.

Laumann goes on to note that while these efforts did initially improve compliance, the fleet was still not reaching the level of compliance it wanted, which would be essential to achieve both from a safety and a business standpoint.

"Due to our efforts, our safety performance was improving," Laumann says. "Because of past performance, however, we were the subject of a thorough FMCSA Compliance Review [audit] in 2008, the results of which showed huge improvement in compliance and safety performance. Throughout the process, we tried to stay in touch with the drivers. We encouraged feedback from drivers, and we evaluated that feedback, always looking for ways to improve our safety performance, efficiency, and overall operations."

To help with hours of service compliance, the fleet began researching and testing electronic logging systems. It assigned electronic logging devices to a cross-section of drivers for testing. The drivers chosen to test equip-

ment had experience with technology ranging from no experience to being very familiar with technology.

"After systems testing, we chose Zonar, whose system was very reliable and fit our needs," Laumann says.

The fleet began installing Zonar Systems equipment, including the 2020 Mobile Communications Tablet, in all company trucks in January 2015.

Laumann explains, "Zonar has the capability beyond that of most electronic logging systems to help with equipment inspections. It seemed to be a very good fit for our company, and an excellent tool to help us improve our operations and maintain safety compliance."

"Since implementing Zonar, we have seen very marked improvement in hours of service compliance," Laumann reports. "We have had very few hours of service violations since January, and our CSA scores have reflected that improvement. Our driver's individual compliance is very easily monitored on a daily basis, which also allows immediate feedback to drivers, rather than monthly feedback on paper logs. Our drivers have responded very well. Many were unsure and even resistant of electronic logs at first, however, most now accept electronic logs and have been quite cooperative."

Zonar's electronic vehicle inspection reporting (EVIR) system has also impacted the maintenance program, with immediate notification to the shop of problems found during driver inspections and documentation that drivers did or did not actually walk around the equipment to complete proper inspections.

RFID tags are placed at various locations on the trucks and trailers. When drivers conduct their inspections, they touch the 2020 tablet to each RFID tag, which provides a list of nearby components for drivers to inspect. The interactive EVIR app prompts them to look for specific component damage. It can also track when drivers started their inspections and when they completed them.

Laumann says, "Shortly after we began installing Zonar in our equipment, we were again audited by FMCSA. This audit, as we expected, showed improvement in compliance safety regulations and safety performance. Our staff in the safety department can, through the use of Zonar, very easily monitor driver's performance and compliance, as well as better monitor maintenance issues. We continue to see steady improvement in our safety performance, and that improvement is reflected in our constantly improving CSA scores, especially in the areas of hours of service and maintenance.

"Avoiding CSA violations and overall safety performance work hand-in-hand," concedes Laumann. "Within any company everyone needs to be involved—including top management, staff, maintenance, operations and drivers—to be successful. Change is not always easy, but it is often necessary." 



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