

FMCSA Safety Investigator Academy Fall Graduation
Remarks: FMCSA Executive Director & Chief Safety Officer
Allotted Time: 5-7 minutes

Introduction

Thank you for that warm introduction.

I want to thank our Academy instructors for taking the time over the past several weeks to ensure everyone here is prepared to join the FMCSA family in their new roles.

I want to thank the Division Administrators for coming here today and for supporting you in your journey. They clearly saw something in all of you by selecting you for this role.

I want to thank our graduates for taking the chance with a job where you must undergo an intense training period, leaving behind family and loved ones on the journey to become a Safety Investigator. I know that can be scary, and it takes a lot of initiative, creativity, and hard work to see yourself in a new role like the one you are entering.

I also want to acknowledge all the family, friends, and supporters here. Without the support of your friends and family, you wouldn't have been able to make it to this day. As a parent myself, I know it is not easy to leave behind your family, so thank you for continuing to show your support.

It is truly an honor to be here on behalf of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Deputy Administrator Vinn White, and our entire agency to congratulate you on this achievement.

About the Class

Each of you is now part of an elite group of hundreds of personnel who work as special agents for FMCSA, serving on the front lines of making our roadways safer.

I noticed from reading your bios that this class has a very diverse set of backgrounds and experiences, and that is something that we have in common.

You come from all walks of life: veterans, truck drivers, law enforcement personnel, correctional officers, government employees, university staff, and healthcare.

This diversity of experience is an apt reflection of the diversity of the industry that you will now find yourself in a position to regulate.

And what I can tell you as someone who has been at FMCSA for nearly 20 years, is that every experience and every skill you bring with you will be relevant to the journey that you will be on as a Safety Investigator.

Making the most of your background and skills will be critical as you engage and build relationships with drivers to ensure they are operating safely on our roadways.

Importance of Safety Investigators

As you continue in your new career with FMCSA, it will be important to continue to connect and work together with not only your fellow Safety Investigators, but also the people that you meet along the way. That includes people who will provide additional training, your Division Administrators, and so many others.

And remember that every day is a learning opportunity. In fact, there are still new things that I learn every day. So, ask questions. Learn from your colleagues and our industry partners. Think critically.

Because you are the face of FMCSA when interacting with trucking companies and truck drivers. You are on the front lines of promoting safety.

And now more than ever, we need you to help fulfill FMCSA's mission to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.

We need you to meet our goal, set in the National Roadway Safety Strategy, of having ZERO deaths on our nation's roads.

I'm proud to report that since Secretary Buttigieg unveiled the National Roadway Safety Strategy over two years ago, we are starting to see tangible results.

For example, from 2022 to 2023, our nation experienced an 11 percent decrease in fatalities involving large trucks. While that is great, that still means over 4,800 people lost their lives in crashes involving large trucks. And that is too many.

These reductions are due, in part, to the hard work of everyone at FMCSA; from our Safety Investigators to the researchers that you will connect with over your careers who analyze data to help us make data-driven decisions.

While we are trending in the right direction, we know that even one death on our roads is one too many. And we are happy to have all of you on board, because as we work to get to zero, you have the power to not only reduce crashes, but also the power to prevent them from happening.

As our newest Safety Investigators, you will prevent unsafe companies and drivers from operating on our nation's roadways.

But what does prevention mean?

It means that a driver will make it home to dinner after several days on the road. It means that you will make it home at the end of the day to your family. It means that parents will make it to see their kids' soccer or dance practices. It means students will make it to college safely, ready to start their next journey in life, much like you are ready to start your next journey at FMCSA.

Know this: You will make a difference — through hard work, diligence, and perseverance. You WILL save lives.

FMCSA Work

And you will always have our unwavering support. We invest in our workforce, and we will continue to invest in you far beyond this academy experience.

We offer opportunities for training to keep you well-informed. We offer opportunities for advancement in your career. We strive for a first-rate working environment for every employee. And we will ensure you have everything you need to do your job successfully.

We are proud that FMCSA has a once-in-a-generation investment in safety through the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. You are at the forefront of how we

use those dollars by investing in our safety partners, empowering our nation's truck drivers, and supporting innovations in safety technology.

We are doing everything we can at FMCSA to support safer roads, prevent crashes, and ultimately save lives.

And when I say "we," that includes all of you. You are on the cutting edge of safety and will be involved in all the innovative and promising safety technologies that we see. These technologies present an opportunity to dramatically trend the curve downwards and prevent crashes and deaths on our roads.

It is truly an exciting and critical time to be joining FMCSA.

Final Call to Action

So, as you go forward, remember what you learned in this course. Remember to act with professionalism, fairness, and diligence, because what you say and do matters. And remember your commitment to being the best investigator that you can be, because your actions will save lives.

Congratulations again on your graduation. We are proud to have you on our team, and we look forward to all that you will accomplish in your new roles.

Thank you.