

Using FMCSA Violations to Prove Negligence in an Alabama Truck Crash

Mobile truck accident lawyers protecting key evidence in Alabama cases

When an 80,000-pound tractor-trailer tears through an Alabama highway, the impact is never just physical. In a few seconds, a regular drive on I-10 or I-65 can turn into a scene of twisted steel, flashing lights, and questions that keep you up at night: Why did this happen, and could it have been prevented? The Alabama [truck accident lawyers](#) at Dean Waite & Associates, LLC know that answer often starts with a simple truth – the crash wasn't an accident. It was the result of a truck driver or trucking company breaking the rules that were supposed to keep you safe.

For families in Alabama, those rules come from two places – state traffic law and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). When a driver or carrier treats those federal safety regulations like optional suggestions, the consequences show up in the emergency room and on your medical bills.

How FMCSA rules connect to negligence in Alabama

FMCSA regulations function like the operating manual for commercial trucking in the United States. They cover who qualifies to sit behind the wheel of a big rig, how long that driver can safely stay on the road, how the truck must be inspected and maintained, and even how cargo should be loaded.

Under Alabama law, when a trucking company or driver breaks a safety rule that was created to protect the public, that violation can trigger a doctrine called negligence per se. In plain terms, negligence per se means the law treats the safety violation itself as proof that the trucking company breached its duty of care, so the focus shifts to whether that violation caused your injuries and what full compensation should look like.

At the same time, Alabama follows one of the harshest fault rules in the country, [pure contributory negligence](#), which means that if a trucking company's defense team convinces a jury you were even 1 percent at fault, your entire claim can be wiped out.

What FMCSA negligence per se really means for your case

Negligence per se is not just a legal phrase; it is a framework that can dramatically change how a truck crash case unfolds in Alabama. Courts here look at four key questions when deciding whether a safety violation qualifies as negligence per se:

- Was the regulation designed to protect a specific class of people, such as the motoring public.
- Are you part of that protected group.

- Was the harm you suffered the type of harm the regulation was meant to prevent.
- Did the violation directly cause or contribute to your injuries.

When a fatigued driver falsifies hours-of-service logs and rear-ends a family vehicle, or when a carrier knowingly sends a truck with worn air brakes onto I 65 and those brakes fail in stop-and-go traffic, the connection between the broken rule and the harm is straightforward. In those situations, the violation itself stands as the breach of duty.

Common FMCSA violations that lead to Alabama truck crashes

Truck accidents are rarely flukes; they're usually the result of systemic shortcuts built into a company's way of doing business.

Some of the most common FMCSA violations that play a role in Alabama crashes include:

- [Hours-of-service violations](#), including driving past the 11-hour limit or staying on duty beyond the 14-hour window, which dramatically increases the risk of fatigue-related wrecks.
- False or incomplete driver logs and electronic logging device data, which hide the reality of a driver's schedule and make it look like rules were followed when they were not.
- Operating without a valid commercial driver's license or with an expired medical certificate, which violates FMCSA driver qualification standards and means the person driving the truck may never have been fit to be there.
- Skipping required pre-trip and post-trip inspections, or ignoring reports of brake, tire, or steering problems, which leads to catastrophic equipment failures on the road.
- Unsafe driving violations, such as speeding, following too closely, or using a handheld cell phone while driving, which show a pattern of risk-taking behind the wheel.

How FMCSA hours-of-service violations turn into fatigue on Alabama roads

Hours of service rules are designed to keep exhausted drivers from piloting massive vehicles at highway speeds. The FMCSA limits how many hours a truck driver can drive in a day and over a 7- or 8-day period and requires rest breaks to combat fatigue.

When companies pay by the mile or pressure drivers to hit unrealistic delivery windows, those drivers start pushing the boundaries of what the law allows. They may

- Drive past the 11-hour limit after 10 consecutive hours off-duty.
- Stay on the road beyond the 14 hour on-duty window.
- Skip the mandatory 30-minute break within the first eight hours of driving.

On paper, the logs might look clean. In reality, we often find inconsistent time stamps, GPS data that does not match the logs, fuel receipts that reveal longer routes, or telematics data that shows the driver was still moving when the log claims they were resting.

How maintenance violations become mechanical failure on the highway

FMCSA maintenance regulations require trucking companies to systematically inspect, repair, and maintain every commercial vehicle they put on the road. They must keep records of inspections, repairs, and defect corrections, and they're not supposed to dispatch trucks with known safety issues.

When those obligations are treated as paperwork instead of life and death rules, predictable failures follow. Worn air brake linings lead to extended stopping distances in traffic; bald tires increase blowout risk on hot pavement; ignored steering problems turn routine curves into rollovers.

From a legal perspective, those maintenance failures are not random breakdowns. They're a direct consequence of ignoring FMCSA standards, and they often support negligence per se when the mechanical problem clearly contributed to the crash.

How our attorneys use FMCSA safety records and company data

FMCSA maintains a [Safety Measurement System](#) database that tracks roadside inspections, violations, and crash data for trucking companies across the country. Carriers receive percentile scores in categories like unsafe driving, hours of service compliance, and vehicle maintenance; higher scores reflect worse safety performance and a greater risk to the public.

When we handle a truck crash case, we do not stop at the single event. We dig into that company's safety history to uncover patterns such as:

- Repeated hours of service violations in the months leading up to your crash.
- A long string of failed brake or lighting inspections.
- Frequent citations for cell phone use or speeding.
- Prior FMCSA interventions or warnings about the same issues.

Who can be held liable when FMCSA rules are broken?

Truck crashes rarely involve only one wrongdoer. Under Alabama law, multiple parties can share responsibility when FMCSA rules are violated and a serious collision follows. Our firm often evaluates liability for:

- The truck driver who chose to drive tired, speed, or ignore obvious safety problems.
- The trucking company that pushed impossible schedules, failed to monitor logs, or skipped vital maintenance in violation of FMCSA requirements.

- Third-party repair shops that signed off on unsafe equipment or used substandard parts, contributing to mechanical failure.
- Cargo loaders who unbalanced or overloaded trailers, leading to rollovers or jackknives in violation of cargo securement rules.

Why FMCSA violations matter even more in a contributory negligence state

In many states, if a jury finds you partially at fault, your compensation is reduced by your percentage of fault. Alabama is different. Here, any degree of fault assigned to you even one percent can bar your entire claim.

Because of that, trucking defense teams scour every inch of your conduct for something they can point to as contributory negligence, whether it is a missed signal, a slight speed excess, or an arguably late reaction to a looming danger.

FMCSA violations help level that playing field. When our attorneys show that a truck driver was over their legal driving hours, that the company ignored repeated brake inspection failures, or that the truck's black box data contradicts the driver's story, the conversation in the courtroom changes.

Instead of letting the defense focus narrowly on your split-second decisions, we anchor the case in the carrier's long-term decisions to break federal safety rules and the preventable chain of events that followed.

Contact a Mobile truck accident law firm today

Evidence of FMCSA violations is time-sensitive. Driver logs can be overwritten, black box data can be lost when a truck returns to service, and physical vehicles can be repaired before your side has a chance to inspect them. At the same time, the trucking company's insurance company is already working to limit its exposure, often starting its own investigation within hours of the crash.

As a Mobile truck accident law firm, [Dean Waite & Associates, LLC](#) acts quickly to send evidence preservation letters, demand critical data, and secure access to the truck and its records before anything can quietly disappear. That early work helps us uncover FMCSA violations, hire reconstruction professionals, and build the kind of negligence per se arguments that carry weight with judges and juries.

If you were hurt in a crash with a commercial truck anywhere in Alabama, you should not be left wondering whether a company's shortcuts played a role. Our attorneys can walk you through what happened, explain how federal trucking rules apply to your situation, and pursue the full measure of accountability and recovery you deserve. [Contact us](#) today for a free, no-obligation conversation about your case.