Need to Contact SAFER?

If you have questions or comments about SAFER, please contact the SAFER Deployment Coordinator at:

e-mail: ***SAFER@jhk.com***
fax: ***703-820-7970***

SAFER at CVSA

SAFER was recently demonstrated at the CVSA Annual Conference in Charleston, WV. The demonstration generated a good deal of interest in SAFER. For a recap of the CVSA meeting, see page 4.

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What's Inside?

The SAFER Report is intended to provide users (and potential users) of the Safety and Fitness Electronic Records (SAFER) system with information regarding SAFER, its uses, its functions and its benefits.

To be a useful tool, however, user input is essential. If you have any questions or comments regarding this publication, please contact the SAFER Deployment Coordinator:

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SAFER REPORT

SAFER: THE SAFETY AND FITNESS ELECTRONIC RECORDS SYSTEM

The SAFER (Safety and Fitness Electronic Record) system initially arose from a congressional requirement that the Federal Highway Administration/Office of Motor Carriers (FHWA/OMC) make prior carrier safety data available electronically at roadside inspection sites so that carriers which had been inspected numerous times and found to be safe would be selected for fewer additional inspections, thus freeing up inspection personnel to focus on other carriers. Making this data accessible "on the road" was also seen as a key step toward electronic clearance of trucks and buses under ITS/CVO (Intelligent Transportation Systems/Commercial Vehicle Operations).

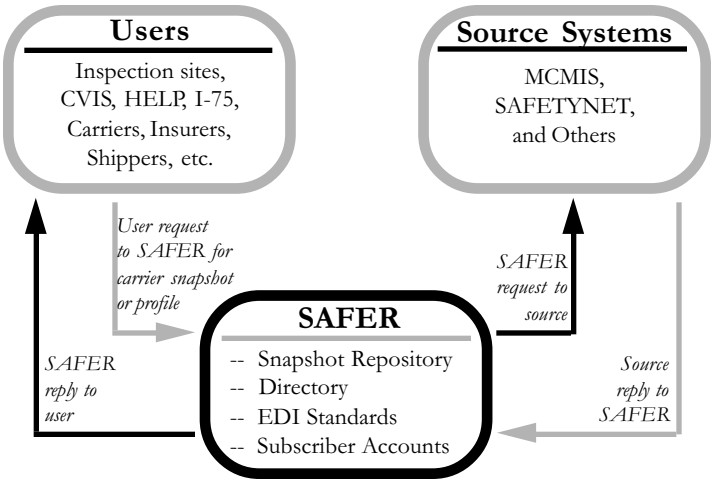
Early in the planning for this system, it became obvious that the "information age" was upon us and there was an emerging demand for electronic access to this type of data from carriers, shippers, insurers, rental companies, and others. The FHWA/OMC convened a steering group, made up of representatives of these industry segments. The SAFER system, now coming into operation, is the result of the guidance of this group and the efforts of the Johns Hopkins University/Applied Physics Laboratory (JHU/APL) staff and other contractors.

In designing SAFER, we tried to provide basic end-user information and the opportunity for third parties to "add value" to the data to meet special user needs. Both "ad hoc" data requests and "data subscriptions" are provided. We have tried to keep fees to a minimum, in the interest of providing the data to as broad a public market as possible. Governmental agencies that provide the data to SAFER will not be charged to get this data back.

With the broader dissemination of the data comes an increased responsibility for its accuracy and timeliness. The Federal government and its State partners are very aware of this responsibility and are taking steps to better assess the accuracy of our data and to assure that carrier complaints about the data are promptly and thoroughly addressed.

We hope with this Report to keep you informed of SAFER developments and to provide a channel for you to suggest ways it can be made more useful.

Thomas Hillegass
Chief, FHWA/OMC Information Division



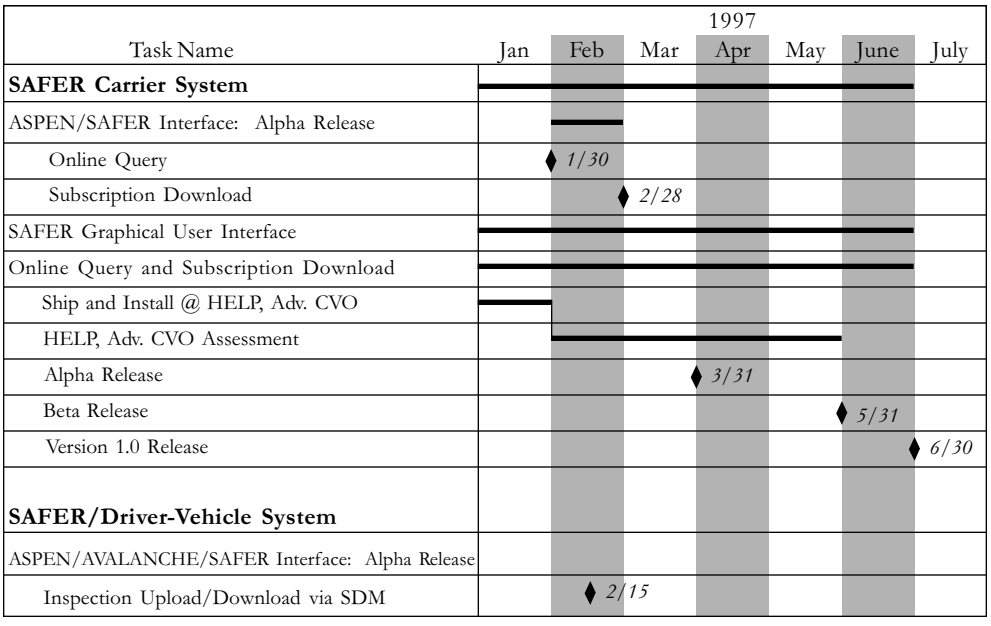
SAFER is a data exchange system designed to facilitate the electronic exchange of carrier, vehicle, and driver safety and credential information between users and source systems. SAFER serves as a repository for carrier, vehicle, and driver snapshot data, a concise record of census, safety, and credential information. SAFER utilizes Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) as a standard method for performing electronic exchange. SAFER allows users to create subscription requests for the kinds of data they are interested in receiving from SAFER and provides a directory service that allows users to communicate with and make requests of source systems, e.g., requesting and receiving a profile report from MCMIS.

SAFER Deployment on Schedule

Over the next several months, a variety of activities will be taking place to help meet the Federal mandate that SAFER support at least 200 Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) sites by June 1997. The following highlights the major deployment activities.

The initial version of SAFER, which allows users to access and query the SAFER/Carrier System over the Internet via the SAFER Home Page and a Web browser, was released in December 1996. Users can submit a query based on a carrier USDOT or ICC number and, in response, obtain the corresponding carrier snapshot record. ASPEN/ISS pen-system users will also be able to make online queries to SAFER and download subscription data to obtain carrier information. The alpha-releases of ASPEN incorporating each of these capabilities is expected in January, 1997 and February, 1997, respectively. The SAFER Graphical User Interface (SGUI), a set of software that will enable government agencies, motor carriers, and other interested organizations to access carrier safety data will be made available to a limited number of user organizations such as HELP, Inc. and Advantage CVO, for operational testing and assessment prior to the application's Version 1.0 release in the second quarter of 1997.

The other major thrust of the deployment process relates to vehicle and driver information. Even though the capability of providing access to vehicle and driver safety data is not scheduled for official release until December of 1997, initial SAFER functionality in this area is currently being developed. An alpha -release of ASPEN to send inspection reports and AVALANCHE to retrieve inspection reports from the SAFER Data Mailbox (SDM) is scheduled for mid February, 1997.



The SAFER Data Mailbox Test is a specially funded program designed to evaluate the potential of SAFER in deterring Out-of-Service Vehicle violations. This project will also be used to test and evaluate a variety of mobile communication options and costs. The Eastern States CVO Coalition has been selected for this evaluation. See page 3 for additional information.

Eastern States CVO Coalition Prepares for SAFER Data Mailbox Testing

The SAFER data mailbox system may be viewed as an electronic post office, automatically re-routing relevant incoming information to the appropriate destination. This operation, known as the SAFER Data Mailbox System, accepts incoming data in a national mailbox, filters and processes incoming information and disperses outgoing data to individual user mailboxes for retrieval. In other words, each SAFER account will be assigned a mailbox which is used to receive information from the SAFER system. SAFER also has its own mailbox into which users place requests for information.

As part of the SAFER deployment strategy, an operational testing period has been planned to evaluate the performance, cost and utility of the SAFER Data Mailbox (SDM) system . Evaluation of the corresponding policy and procedural issues related to the use of this new tool will also be examined. The Eastern States CVO Coalition has been selected to assist in the testing and evaluation process.

The Coalition is comprised of the following six mid-Atlantic states, all of which will be involved in operational testing: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. These states have aggressive motor carrier inspection programs covering a variety of enforcement operations.

The operational testing will take place in two phases. Phase 1 begins with establishing the requirements of each state for communicating with SAFER. These may include leased-line, dial-up, or cellular connectivity. After the procurement and set-up of communications equipment, field testing will begin. In the first phase of testing, inspection data will be sent from the roadside, using the ASPEN application, to the appropriate SAFETYNET mailbox within the SDM system. SAFETYNET operators can then retrieve and utilize the data from their mailbox at their own polling rate. Data retrieval will be achieved through the use of AVALANCHE software, an enhanced electronic bulletin board application.

Once the process for sending and retrieving inspection records has been tested, Phase 2 will begin. In this phase, inspection reports will be sent to and stored in the SAFER system via the SDM. SAFER will also use this information to build a vehicle and/or driver snapshot depending on the type of inspeciton performed. SAFER will allow inspectors to make online inspection report and vehicle/driver snapshot queries via the ASPEN application.

SAFER Business Strategy Explores Users Needs

A goal in establishing SAFER is that it should ultimately be self-sustainig and funded by those who benefit from its services. Initially, SAFER will be heavily subsidized by FHWA. Recognizing the need to identify potential users and establish a fair and equitable cost recovery strategy, FHWA initiated a SAFER business strategy planning effort to identify potential users and uses of SAFER and to establish a path for transitioning from federal sponsorship to self-sustainment.

The potential users and uses of SAFER are varied. SAFER will help enforcement agencies target for inspections those carriers whose safety records indicate the need for closer monitoring while relieving safe carriers of unnecessary inspection delays. Carriers will have better access to information that will inform them of potential safety problems. Insurers, capital providers, fleet leasing firms, and other who accept financial risk will be better equipped to assess risks before making investment decisions. Shippers will be better informed about the safety records of the carriers they choose to transport their merchandise. Vehicle and equipment manufacturers will be able to access information that will help them develop safer products and maintenance procedures. Advocacy and interest groups from all perspectives will be able to access information that will help them make their cases regarding motor carrier safety.

To learn more about potential uses and users of motor carrier safety information, a series of interviews and discussions were held with a number of potential users with a variety of institutional perspectives. Discussion topics included current use of motor carrier safety data, data sources and formats, data volume and cost, and assessments of the adequacy of the data currently available. Among the more significant findings were:

- Almost all participants use one or more sources of motor carrier safety data.

Continued on page 4

SAFER Demonstrated at CVSA Meeting

At the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) meeting held in Charleston, West Virginia, in September 1996, SAFER was demonstrated to approximately 200 CVSA participants. In a first of its kind outreach to the commercial vehicle community, the SAFER program was explained and demonstrated during a series of one hour presentations. Each of the ten standing committees of CVSA asked for a scheduled demonstration to be worked into their regular conference agendas.

The SAFER program's objectives, operating plans, relationships to other programs such as ASPEN and SAFETYNET, and economic assessment were provided to an audience that included vehicle inspectors, commercial carrier operators, representatives of commercial shipping companies, and federal and state government representatives. After a series of briefings on various aspects of the program, the attendees were shown the SAFER Internet Home Page and some of the information and capabilities it will provide. The SAFER/ASPEN/ISS communication link was demonstrated and explained next. This was followed by a discussion of SAFER deployment plans.

Reaction from attendees was very positive. They had heard about SAFER, but had not understood its relationship to other programs, and did not realize it was as far along as it is. They seemed surprised and excited that the program was deploying to selected sites in early 1997 for operational testing. Comments from CVSA members from Canada and Mexico indicated interest in learning more about the effort, since very little of their vehicle information processing is currently handled electronically.

Paul North, the JHU/APL program lead, conducted the demonstrations, with support from SAIC's Regina Sebastian, Stephanie Barrera, and Mike Smith.

SAFER Draws Interest from CVSA Members

SAFER Interest Survey forms were made available at the CVSA SAFER demonstrations, and many of them were returned. Responses from these forms will be used to gauge the information needs of SAFER users and to help guide the ongoing SAFER development.

Thirty-three forms were returned at the CVSA conference itself. Of those agencies responding, 20 were enforcement agencies, five were motor carriers, and eight responses were received from other agencies, including one insurance company. The matrix below indicates that a majority of respondents are interested in obtaining safety information from SAFER, and to a lesser degree credential information. Note that most respondents were interested in carrier safety data, the type of data that will be available in the initial version of SAFER.

Your agency is interested in:

	Carriers	Vehicles	Drivers
Safety Data for:	29 (88%)	23 (70%)	23 (70%)
Credential Data for:	15 (45%)	14 (42%)	15 (45%)

SAFER Business Strategy

Continued from page 3

- About three-fourths of the participants use government resources for their safety data and about half use commercial data services.
- Almost all participants receive their data in a hard copy form. Three-fourths also receive some safety data in an electronic format.
- Participant responses regarding the volume of safety data requested ranged from 1 to 7,000 data requests per month.
- Two-thirds of the participants access MCMIS.
- Two-thirds of the participants pay for CV safety data. Their cost per report ranged from 50 cents to 100 dollars.
- Three-fourths of all respondents felt that the information available did not meet their needs, one-fourth felt that it did.
- The three most important improvements mentioned were on-line capabilities, reliable and accurate content, and access/timeliness. Affordability was a close fourth.