SUBJECT: Deadline for replacing MC number system with new Unified Registration System coming soon.

For decades transportation and logistics professionals have relied on docket numbers — primarily MC numbers — to identify companies in our industry. MC numbers were a handy way to search for trucking companies on public and proprietary web sites, including DAT load boards and DAT Carrier Watch. These numbers have provided clues to the age of a company and access to records of its legal authority to conduct business.

What happens when docket numbers go away?

We will soon find out. Docket numbers, including MC, MX and FF numbers, will be discontinued on October 23, 2015.

The disappearance of docket numbers is a feature of a new Unified Registration System (URS) for all companies regulated by the US Department of Transportation (DOT). In order to reduce paperwork and create a single clearinghouse for information on motor carriers, brokers and freight forwarders the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) passed a final rule in August 2013 to establish the URS. That rule states that “FMCSA will use the USDOT Number as its sole unique identifier for motor carriers, brokers, and freight forwarders subject to its regulations” and “…discontinue issuance of MC, MX, and FF Numbers to those entities who register with FMCSA.”

When do these changes take effect?

The rule states that all companies registering or updating their information with FMCSA must do so via the URS beginning October 23. After the launch of the URS online portal, companies that register with FMCSA will be given a USDOT number, but no docket number. Of course, that October deadline is dependent on the existence of a URS web site that can handle the registrations.

Why is FMCSA creating the URS and eliminating docket numbers?

FMCSA touts time savings as a key benefit of the URS, a result of eliminating paper forms. But the rule itself addresses another, perhaps larger, concern. It states: “FMCSA believes that combining…Agency information systems into the URS will improve the Agency’s ability to detect and prevent unscrupulous motor carriers that reinvent themselves to avoid compliance with regulations and enforcement actions.” USDOT numbers are easier to verify, because, unlike docket numbers, USDOT numbers have never been transferable. So FMCSA hopes to use the URS to put a stop to "chameleon" carriers, who get shut down for safety violations and then open up again in the form of a new company with a different MC number.
Can I still use my docket number?
Yes. Even though the docket number won't have an official purpose, companies may continue to use their numbers for advertising, marketing or other reasons. MC numbers do not have to be removed from vehicles. However, the agency encourages carriers to stop using MC numbers when they buy or repaint equipment.

What happens to my authority? It is currently based on my docket number.
Currently the company's authority — whether for a common or contract carrier, broker or freight forwarder — is attached to the docket number. After the launch of URS, the authority registrations will be tied to the company's DOT number, along with safety data. For brokers and shippers, it means they can track a single number instead of two separate numbers, when they want to check whether a carrier is legal and has a good safety record. Following the launch of the URS, the future of the insurance and SAFER web sites is uncertain, as URS will be the definitive single source for data on a company’s authority, insurance and safety data. The expectation is that a public web site will be made available, to enable searches of URS data, but the DOT has not yet released details on this effort.

Source: Kevin Scullin