

Centralized Station Master (CSM) History & Background

Conception of CSM

Beginning in the 1980's, the railroad industry proposed the creation of an expanded geographic database to replace the Freight Station Accounting Code (FSAC) data base which had been in place for over 30 years. At that time, the FSAC database covers only rail locations and contained six data elements:

1. Standard Carrier Alpha Code
2. Standard Point Location Code
3. Freight Station Accounting Code
4. Station Name (limited to 19 characters)
5. County Name (limited to 26 characters) and
6. State

In addition to railroad locations, the new database, referred to as the CSM, was envisioned to also contain data regarding non-rail carriers (truck and water) as well as data on points outside of North America. To provide an accurate foundation for the CSM, an industry-wide survey was undertaken in 1989 to determine the accuracy of the station information reported in the (then existing) FSAC database. Completed in 1990, this survey resulted in the removal of over 5 thousand obsolete stations from the FSAC database. Employed as a basis for the CSM, the FSAC data was copied to the new CSM file structure and daily operation (including 431 EDI broadcasts) began on April 11, 1991.

Evolution of CSM

Since its inception in 2001, the CSM has been expanded and modified. As the railroad industry has required new data elements or new options for existing data elements, the CSM Committees discuss and approve these changes, and implementation into the CSM system begins.

As a part of this ongoing process, many enhancements were made to the CSM in July of 1992. Several data elements previously optional were made mandatory to ensure the completeness of information in the CSM and to facilitate the use of the CSM in relationships with other Industry Reference Files (IRFs) by the Industry Wide Initiatives (IWIs) beginning with the Rate EDI Network (REN) and the Interline Settlement System (ISS).

Another more extensive industry-wide survey of the CSM was begun in August of 1992 to obtain missing data for existing stations. The Data Maintenance Technical Advisory Group (DM-TAG) of the Industry Reference Files Strategy Working Committee (IRFSWC) has investigated all data in the CSM records that does not pass the existing edits in the file system, and all data has either been corrected, or is scheduled for correction in the near future.

In 2001, the CSM was expanded to contain non-rail locations in addition to the existing rail locations. Efforts are underway to add nearly 10,000 International locations to the CSM in the future.

Importance of CSM

Initially, the CSM derived its importance from the fact that it drove the FSAC Tariff publication and was used by the Waybill processing system to validate station information. Recently, with the advent of ISS, REN, and other strategic systems, the CSM has become one of most critical of the Industry Reference Files.

The CSM will be used online by the IWI systems to obtain a variety of information. It is expected that as the CSM evolves to meet the needs of future IWIs, it will be modified extensively and future industry-wide surveys may be required to complete new data field requirements in the CSM.

Updating the CSM

The CSM data can be updated currently using two methods: hardcopy and EDI. Errors are corrected by contacting the Road's CSM contact.

Obtaining Copies of the CSM

The CSM is currently distributed in two methods, hardcopy and EDI. The hardcopy CSM takes the form of the Official Railroad Station List (OPSL Directory). It is currently printed as a PDF file posted to the Railinc SharePoint site. Supplements are published bi-monthly during each of the twelve subsequent months. The OPSL Directory is published through Railinc in Cary, NC.

When a company has established an EDI connection to the AAR, they can begin to receive all CSM updates electronically. Real time updates of CSM data are broadcast to all EDI participants after each update.

Railinc Business Services Division provides a monthly CSM flat file subscription. A product list of publications is obtained on the Railinc website at [Railinc Publications](#).

All IRF forms can be obtained on the Railinc website at [Centralized Station Master](#).

Customer Success Center

For questions regarding CSM, EDI connection to Railinc, IRF products or IRF forms, contact the Customer Success Center at (877) 724-5462 or csc@railinc.com.

Legal Disclaimer: Any actions taken in reliance on or pursuant to this document are subject to Railinc's Terms of Use, as set forth in <https://public.railinc.com/terms-use>, and all AAR rules.