*\*Question 31:*What location may a motor carrier designate as its "principal place of business?"

*Guidance:* In instances where a motor carrier has more than one terminal or office, the regulations do not explicitly place a restriction on which location a motor carrier may designate as its principal place of business. The definition states that such a location is "normally" the carrier's headquarters; the rule does not require motor carriers to use the company's corporate headquarters as its principal place of business. However, motor carriers are limited to using an actual place of business of the motor carrier. Moreover, a motor carrier may designate as its principal place of business only locations that contain offices of the motor carrier's senior-most management executives, management officials or employees responsible for the administration, management and oversight of safety operations and compliance with the FMCSRs and Hazardous Materials Regulations. In determining its principal place of business a motor carrier must consider the following factors: (a) The relative importance of the activities performed at each location, and, if this factor is not determinative, then (b) time spent at each location by motor carrier management or corporate officers.

FMCSA authorized representatives will use the above two factors in determining whether a motor carrier has designated an appropriate location as its principal place of business. In addition, FMCSA may also consider whether the location is operated, controlled or owned by the motor carrier, whether operations relating to the transportation of persons or property regularly take place at the designated location, whether any of the employees of the motor carrier regularly report to the location for duty, whether any leased or owned vehicles of the company are maintained on the premises, and whether any of the records required by parts 382, 387, 390, 391, 395, 396 and 397 are maintained on the premises. In the event a carrier does not designate a qualifying location as its principal place of business, FMCSA may initiate appropriate enforcement action or take action regarding the carrier's USDOT registration.

A motor carrier with multiple business locations may maintain some records at locations of the motor carrier other than, or in addition to, its principal place of business. However, after a request has been made by an FMCSA authorized representative, a motor carrier with multiple business locations must make records required by parts 382, 387, 390, 391, 395, 396 and 397 available for inspection at the principal place of business or other location specified by the special agent or authorized representative within 48 hours. Pursuant to § 390.29, "Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays are excluded from the computation of the 48-hour period of time." A motor carrier with a single business location must make records required by parts 382, 387, 390, 391, 395, 396 and 397 available upon request.

A motor carrier may not designate as its principal place of business any location where the motor carrier is not engaged in business operations related to the transportation of persons or property. For example, post office box centers or commercial courier service establishments that receive and hold mail or packages for third party pickup may not be designated a "principal place of business" (other than by the courier service provider itself). A motor carrier may not designate the office of a consultant, service agent, or attorney as the motor carrier's principal place of business if the motor carrier is not engaged in operations related to the transportation of persons or property at that location.