

# Section 1: Introduction

There is a federal requirement that each state have minimum standards for the licensing of commercial drivers. This manual provides driver license testing information for drivers who wish to have a commercial driver license (CDL). This manual does NOT provide information on all the federal and state requirements needed before you can drive a commercial motor vehicle (CMV). You may have to contact your state driver licensing authority for additional information.

You must have a CDL to operate:

- A single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of more than 26,000 pounds.
- A trailer with a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds if the gross combination weight rating is more than 26,000 pounds.
- A vehicle designed to transport more than 15 persons (including the driver).
- Any size vehicle which requires hazardous materials placards.

(Your state may have additional definitions of CMVs.)

To get a CDL, you must pass knowledge and skill tests. This manual will help you pass the tests.

## **This Section Explains**

- ***Commercial Driver License Tests***
- ***Other Safety Rules***

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You will have to take one or more knowledge tests, depending on what class of license and what endorsements you need. The CDL knowledge tests include:

- The general knowledge test, taken by all applicants.
- The passenger transport test, taken by all bus driver applicants.
- The air brakes test, which you must take if your vehicle has air brakes.
- The combination vehicles test, which is required if you want to drive combination vehicles.
- The hazardous materials test, required if you want to haul hazardous material or waste in amounts which require placarding.
- The tanker test, required if you want to haul liquids in bulk.
- The doubles/triples test, required if you want to pull double or triple trailers.

## **1.1 Commercial Driver License Tests**

- ***Knowledge Tests***

- **Skills Test**

If you pass the required knowledge test(s), you can take the CDL skills tests. There are three types of general skills that will be tested: pre-trip inspection, basic vehicle control, and on-road driving. You must take these tests in the type of vehicle for which you wish to be licensed.

**Pre-trip Vehicle Inspection.** You will be tested to see if you know whether your vehicle is safe to drive. You may be asked to do a pre-trip inspection of your vehicle and explain to the examiner what you would inspect and why. Section 10 of this manual tells you what to inspect and how to inspect it.

**Basic Vehicle Control.** You will be tested on your skill to control the vehicle. You will be asked to move your vehicle forward, backward, and turn it within a defined area. These areas may be marked with traffic lanes, cones, barriers, or something similar. The examiner will tell you how each control test is to be done. Section 11 of this manual explains more about this test.

**On-road Test.** You will be tested on your skill to safely drive your vehicle in a variety of traffic situations. The situations may include left and right turns, intersections, railway crossings, curves, up and down grades, single or multi-lane roads, streets, or highways. The examiner will tell you where to drive. Section 12 of this manual explains more about this test.

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## 1.2 Other CDL Rules

There are other federal and state rules which affect drivers operating CMVs in all states.

- You cannot have more than one license. If you break this rule, a court may fine you up to \$5,000 or put you in jail. Keep your home state license and return any others.
- You must notify your employer within 30 days of conviction for any traffic violations (except parking). This is true no matter what type of vehicle you were driving.
- You must notify your motor vehicle licensing agency within 30 days if you are convicted in any other jurisdiction of any traffic violation (except parking). This is true no matter what type of vehicle you were driving.
- You must notify your employer if your license is suspended, revoked, or canceled, or if you are disqualified from driving.
- You must give your employer information on all driving jobs you have held for the past 10 years. You must do this when you apply for a commercial driving job.
- No one can drive a commercial motor vehicle without a CDL. A court may fine you up to \$5,000 or put you in jail for breaking this rule.

- Your employer may not let you drive a commercial motor vehicle if you have more than one license or if your CDL is suspended or revoked. A court may fine the employer up to \$5,000 or put him/her in jail for breaking this rule.
- All states are connected to one computerized system to share information about CDL drivers. The states will check on drivers' accident records and be sure that drivers don't get more than one CDL.
- You will lose your CDL for at least one year for a first offense:
  - If you drive a CMV under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance (for example, illegal drugs).
  - If you leave the scene of an accident involving a CMV you were driving.
  - If you use a CMV to commit a felony.

If the offense occurs while you are operating a CMV that is placarded for hazardous materials, you will lose your CDL for at least three years. You will lose your CDL for life for a second offense. You will also lose your CDL for life if you use a CMV to commit a felony involving controlled substances.

- You will lose your CDL:
  - For at least 60 days if you have committed two serious traffic violations within a three-year period involving a CMV.
  - For at least 120 days for three serious traffic violations within a three-year period.

"Serious traffic violations" are excessive speeding (15 mph or more above the posted limit), reckless driving, improper or erratic lane changes, following a vehicle too closely, and traffic offenses committed in a CMV in connection with fatal traffic accidents.

- It is illegal to operate a CMV if your Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is .04% or more. You will lose your CDL for one year for your first offense. You will lose it for life for your second offense. If your blood alcohol concentration is less than 0.04% but you have any detectable amount, you will be put out-of-service for 24 hours.
- If you operate a CMV, you shall be deemed to have given your consent to alcohol testing for the above mentioned violations.

- ***Serious Traffic Violations***

- ***Disqualifications***

- ***Implied Consent***

These rules will improve highway safety for you and for all highway users.

Your state may have additional rules which you must also obey.