



## **Commercial Driver's License Standards, Requirements and Penalties**

\*Information excerpted from the U.S. Department of Transportation website

### **§ 383.3: Applicability**

A. The rules in this part apply to every person who operates a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate, foreign, or intrastate commerce, to all employers of such persons, and to all States.

B. The exceptions contained in §390.3(f) of this subchapter do not apply to this part. The employers and drivers identified in § 390.3(f) must comply with the requirements of this part, unless otherwise provided in this section.

C. Exception for certain military drivers. Each State must exempt from the requirements of this part individuals who operate CMVs for military purposes. This exception is applicable to active duty military personnel; members of the military reserves; member of the national guard on active duty, including personnel on full-time national guard duty, personnel on part-time national guard training, and national guard military technicians (civilians who are required to wear military uniforms); and active duty U.S. Coast Guard personnel. This exception is not applicable to U.S. Reserve technicians.

D. Exception for farmers, firefighters, emergency response vehicle drivers, and drivers removing snow and ice. A State may, at its discretion, exempt individuals identified in paragraphs D. 1, D. 2, and D. 3 of this section from the requirements of this part. The use of this waiver is limited to the driver's home State unless there is a reciprocity agreement with adjoining States.

1. Operators of a farm vehicle which is:

- i. Controlled and operated by a farmer, including operation by employees or family members;
- ii. Used to transport either agricultural products, farm machinery, farm supplies, or both to or from a farm;
- iii. Not used in the operations of a common or contract motor carrier;
- and
- iv. Used within 241 kilometers (150 miles) of the farmer's farm.

2. Firefighters and other persons who operate CMVs which are necessary to the preservation of life or property or the execution of emergency governmental functions, are equipped with audible and visual signals and are not subject to normal traffic regulation. These vehicles include fire trucks, hook and ladder



trucks, foam or water transport trucks, police SWAT team vehicles, ambulances, or other vehicles that are used in response to emergencies.

3.

- i. A driver, employed by an eligible unit of local government, operating a commercial motor vehicle within the boundaries of that unit for the purpose of removing snow or ice from a roadway by plowing, sanding, or salting, if
  - a. The properly licensed employee who ordinarily operates a commercial motor vehicle for these purposes is unable to operate the vehicle; or
  - b. The employing governmental entity determines that a snow or ice emergency exists that requires additional assistance.
- ii. This exemption shall not preempt State laws and regulations concerning the safe operation of commercial motor vehicles.

E. Restricted commercial drivers license (CDL) for certain drivers in the State of Alaska.

1. The State of Alaska may, at its discretion, waive only the following requirements of this part and issue a CDL to each driver that meets the conditions set forth in paragraphs E. 2 and 3 of this section:
  - i. The knowledge tests standards for testing procedures and methods of subpart H, but must continue to administer knowledge tests that fulfill the content requirements of subpart G for all applicants;
  - ii. All the skills test requirements; and
  - iii. The requirement under §383.153(a)(4) to have a photograph on the license document.
2. Drivers of CMVs in the State of Alaska must operate exclusively over roads that meet both of the following criteria to be eligible for the exception in paragraph E. 1 of this section:
  - i. Such roads are not connected by land highway or vehicular way to the land-connected State highway system; and
  - ii. Such roads are not connected to any highway or vehicular way with an average daily traffic volume greater than 499.
3. Any CDL issued under the terms of this paragraph must carry two restrictions:
  - i. Holders may not operate CMVs over roads other than those specified in paragraph E. 2 of this section; and
  - ii. The license is not valid for CMV operation outside the State of Alaska.



F. Restricted CDL for certain drivers in farm-related service industries.

1. A State may, at its discretion, waive the required knowledge and skills tests of subpart H of this part and issue restricted CDLs to employees of these designated farm-related service industries:

- i. Agri-chemical businesses;
- ii. Custom harvesters;
- iii. Farm retail outlets and suppliers;
- iv. Livestock feeders.

2. A restricted CDL issued pursuant to this paragraph shall meet all the requirements of this part, except subpart H of this part. A restricted CDL issued pursuant to this paragraph shall be accorded the same reciprocity as a CDL meeting all of the requirements of this part. The restrictions imposed upon the issuance of this restricted CDL shall not limit a person's use of the CDL in a non-CMV during either validated or non-validated periods, nor shall the CDL affect a State's power to administer its driver licensing program for operators of vehicles other than CMVs.

3. A State issuing a CDL under the terms of this paragraph must restrict issuance as follows:

- i. Applicants must have a good driving record as defined in this paragraph. Drivers who have not held any motor vehicle operator's license for at least one year shall not be eligible for this CDL. Drivers who have between one and two years of driving experience must demonstrate a good driving record for their entire driving history. Drivers with more than two years of driving experience must have a good driving record for the two most recent years. For the purposes of this paragraph, the term good driving record means that an applicant:
  - a. Has not had more than one license (except in the instances specified in §383.21);
  - b. Has not had any license suspended, revoked, or canceled;
  - c. Has not had any conviction for any type of motor vehicle for the disqualifying offenses contained in §383.51(b);
  - d. Has not had any conviction for any type of motor vehicle for serious traffic violations; and
  - e. Has not had any conviction for a violation of State or local law relating to motor vehicle traffic control (other than a parking violation) arising in connection with any traffic accident, and has no record of an accident in which he/she was at fault.



- ii. Restricted CDLs shall have the same renewal cycle as unrestricted CDLs, but shall be limited to the seasonal period or periods as defined by the State of licensure, provided that the total number of calendar days in any 12-month period for which the restricted CDL is valid does not exceed 180. If a State elects to provide for more than one seasonal period, the restricted CDL is valid for commercial motor vehicle operation only during the currently approved season, and must be revalidated for each successive season. Only one seasonal period of validity may appear on the license document at a time. The good driving record must be confirmed prior to any renewal or revalidation.
- iii. Restricted CDL holders are limited to operating Group B and C vehicles, as described in subpart F of this part.
- iv. Restricted CDLs shall not be issued with any endorsements on the license document. Only the limited tank vehicle and hazardous materials endorsement privileges that the restricted CDL automatically confers and are described in paragraph (f)(3)(v) of this section are permitted.
- v. Restricted CDL holders may not drive vehicles carrying any placardable quantities of hazardous materials, except for diesel fuel in quantities of 3,785 liters (1,000 gallons) or less; liquid fertilizers (i.e., plant nutrients) in vehicles or implements of husbandry in total quantities of 11,355 liters (3,000 gallons) or less; and solid fertilizers (i.e., solid plant nutrients) that are not transported with any organic substance.
- vi. Restricted CDL holders may not hold an unrestricted CDL at the same time.
- vii. Restricted CDL holders may not operate a commercial motor vehicle beyond 241 kilometers (150 miles) from the place of business or the farm currently being served.

G. Restricted CDL for certain drivers in the pyrotechnic industry.

- 1. A State may, at its discretion, waive the required hazardous materials knowledge tests of subpart H of this part and issue restricted CDLs to part-time drivers operating commercial motor vehicles transporting less than 227 kilograms (500 pounds) of fireworks classified as DOT Class 1.3G explosives.
- 2. A State issuing a CDL under the terms of this paragraph must restrict issuance as follows:
  - i. The GVWR of the vehicle to be operated must be less than 4,537 kilograms (10,001 pounds);



ii. If a State believes, at its discretion, that the training required by §172.704 of this title adequately prepares part-time drivers meeting the other requirements of this paragraph to deal with fireworks and the other potential dangers posed by fireworks transportation and use, the State may waive the hazardous materials knowledge tests of subpart H of this part. The State may impose any requirements it believes is necessary to ensure itself that a driver is properly trained pursuant to § 172.704 of this title.

iii. A restricted CDL document issued pursuant to this paragraph shall have a statement clearly imprinted on the face of the document that is substantially similar as follows: "For use as a CDL only during the period from June 30 through July 6 for purposes of transporting less than 227 kilograms (500 pounds) of fireworks classified as DOT Class 1.3G explosives in a vehicle with a GVWR of less than 4,537 kilograms (10,001 pounds).

3. A restricted CDL issued pursuant to this paragraph shall meet all the requirements of this part, except those specifically identified. A restricted CDL issued pursuant to this paragraph shall be accorded the same reciprocity as a CDL meeting all of the requirements of this part. The restrictions imposed upon the issuance of this restricted CDL shall not limit a person's use of the CDL in a non-CMV during either validated or non-validated periods, nor shall the CDL affect a State's power to administer its driver licensing program for operators of vehicles other than CMVs.

4. Restricted CDLs shall have the same renewal cycle as unrestricted CDLs, but shall be limited to the seasonal period of June 30 through July 6 of each year or a lesser period as defined by the State of licensure.

5. Persons who operate commercial motor vehicles during the period from July 7 through June 29 for purposes of transporting less than 227 kilograms (500 pounds) of fireworks classified as DOT Class 1.3G explosives in a vehicle with a GVWR of less than 4,537 kilograms (10,001 pounds) and who also operate such vehicles for the same purposes during the period June 30 through July 6 shall not be issued a restricted CDL pursuant to this paragraph.

H. Exception for drivers of "covered farm vehicles." The rules in this part do not apply to a driver of a "covered farm vehicle," as defined in § 390.5 of this chapter.



### **§ 383.23: Commercial driver's license**

#### **A. General rule.**

1. No person shall operate a commercial motor vehicle unless such person has taken and passed written and driving tests for a CLP or CDL that meet the Federal standards contained in subparts F, G, and H of this part for the commercial motor vehicle that person operates or expects to operate.
2. Except as provided in paragraph B of this section, no person may legally operate a CMV unless such person possesses a CDL which meets the standards contained in subpart J of this part, issued by his/her State or jurisdiction of domicile.

#### **B. Exception**

1. If a CMV operator is not domiciled in a foreign jurisdiction that the Administrator has determined tests drivers and issues CDLs in accordance with, or under standards similar to, the standards contained in subparts F, G, and H of this part,<sup>1</sup> the person may obtain a Non-domiciled CLP or Non-domiciled CDL from a State that does comply with the testing and licensing standards contained in such subparts F, G, and H of this part, so long as that person meets the requirements of §383.71(f). 11 Effective December 29, 1988, the Administrator determined that commercial driver's licenses issued by Canadian Provinces and Territories in conformity with the Canadian National Safety Code are in accordance with the standards of this part. Effective November 21, 1991, the Administrator determined that the new Licencias Federales de Conductor issued by the United Mexican States are in accordance with the standards of this part. Therefore, under the single license provision of §383.21, a driver holding a commercial driver's license issued under the Canadian National Safety Code or a new Licencia Federal de Conductor issued by Mexico is prohibited from obtaining a non-domiciled CDL, or any other type of driver's license, from a State or other jurisdiction in the United States.

(2) If an individual is domiciled in a State while that State is prohibited from issuing CDLs in accordance with §384.405 of this subchapter, that individual is eligible to obtain a Non-domiciled CLP or Non-domiciled CDL from any State that elects to issue a Non-domiciled CDL and which complies with the testing and licensing standards contained in subparts F, G, and H of this part, so long as that person meets the requirements of §383.71(f).

3. If an individual possesses a CLP, as defined in §383.5, the individual is authorized to operate a class of CMV as provided by the CLP in accordance with §383.25.



### **§ 383.110: General Requirement**

A. All drivers of CMVs must have the knowledge and skills necessary to operate a CMV safely as contained in this subpart. The specific types of items that a State must include in the knowledge and skills tests that it administers to CDL applicants are included in this subpart.

### **§ 383.111: Required Knowledge**

A. All CMV operators must have knowledge of the following 20 general areas:

1. Safe operations regulations. Driver-related elements of the regulations contained in parts 391, 392, 393, 395, 396, and 397 of this subchapter, such as:
  - i. Motor vehicle inspection, repair, and maintenance requirements;
  - ii. Procedures for safe vehicle operations;
  - iii. The effects of fatigue, poor vision, hearing impairment, and general health upon safe commercial motor vehicle operation;
  - iv. The types of motor vehicles and cargoes subject to the requirements contained in part 397 of this subchapter; and
  - v. The effects of alcohol and drug use upon safe commercial motor vehicle operations.
2. Safe vehicle control systems. The purpose and function of the controls and instruments commonly found on CMVs.
3. CMV safety control systems.
  - i. Proper use of the motor vehicle's safety system, including lights, horns, side and rear-view mirrors, proper mirror adjustments, fire extinguishers, symptoms of improper operation revealed through instruments, motor vehicle operation characteristics, and diagnosing malfunctions.
  - ii. CMV drivers must have knowledge of the correct procedures needed to use these safety systems in an emergency situation, e.g., skids and loss of brakes.
- 4) Basic control. The proper procedures for performing various basic maneuvers, including:
  - i. Starting, warming up, and shutting down the engine;
  - ii. Putting the vehicle in motion and stopping;
  - iii. Backing in a straight line; and
  - iv. Turning the vehicle, e.g., basic rules, off tracking, right/left turns and right curves.
5. Shifting. The basic shifting rules and terms for common transmissions, including:



- i. Key elements of shifting, e.g., controls, when to shift, and double clutching;
  - ii. Shift patterns and procedures; and
  - iii. Consequences of improper shifting.
6. Backing. The procedures and rules for various backing maneuvers, including:
  - i. Backing principles and rules; and
  - ii. Basic backing maneuvers, e.g., straight-line backing, and backing on a curved path.
- 7) Visual search. The importance of proper visual search, and proper visual search methods, including:
  - i. Seeing ahead and to the sides;
  - ii. Use of mirrors; and
  - iii. Seeing to the rear.
- 8) Communication. The principles and procedures for proper communications and the hazards of failure to signal properly, including:
  - i. Signaling intent, e.g., signaling when changing direction in traffic;
  - ii. Communicating presence, e.g., using horn or lights to signal presence; and
  - iii. Misuse of communications.
9. Speed management. The importance of understanding the effects of speed, including:
  - i. Speed and stopping distance;
  - ii. Speed and surface conditions;
  - iii. Speed and the shape of the road;
  - iv. Speed and visibility; and
  - v. Speed and traffic flow.
10. Space management . The procedures and techniques for controlling the space around the vehicle, including:
  - i. The importance of space management;
  - ii. Space cushions, e.g., controlling space ahead/to the rear;
  - iii. Space to the sides; and
  - iv. Space for traffic gaps.
11. Night operation. Preparations and procedures for night driving, including:
  - i. Night driving factors, e.g., driver factors (vision, glare, fatigue, inexperience);



- ii. Roadway factors (low illumination, variation in illumination, unfamiliarity with roads, other road users, especially drivers exhibiting erratic or improper driving); and
  - iii. Vehicle factors (headlights, auxiliary lights, turn signals, windshields and mirrors).
12. Extreme driving conditions. The basic information on operating in extreme driving conditions and the hazards encountered in such conditions, including:
- i. Bad weather, e.g., snow, ice, sleet, high wind;
  - ii. Hot weather; and
  - iii. Mountain driving.
13. Hazard perceptions. The basic information on hazard perception and clues for recognition of hazards, including:
- i. Road characteristics; and
  - ii. Road user activities.
14. Emergency maneuvers. The basic information concerning when and how to make emergency maneuvers, including:
- i. Evasive steering;
  - ii. Emergency stop;
  - iii. Off road recovery;
  - iv. Brake failure; and
  - v. Blowouts.
15. Skid control and recovery. The information on the causes and major types of skids, as well as the procedures for recovering from skids.
16. Relationship of cargo to vehicle control. The principles and procedures for the proper handling of cargo, including:
- i. Consequences of improperly secured cargo, drivers' responsibilities, and Federal/State and local regulations;
  - ii. Principles of weight distribution; and
  - iii. Principles and methods of cargo securement.
17. Vehicle inspections. The objectives and proper procedures for performing vehicle safety inspections, as follows:
- i. The importance of periodic inspection and repair to vehicle safety.
  - ii. The effect of undiscovered malfunctions upon safety.
  - iii. What safety-related parts to look for when inspecting vehicles, e.g., fluid leaks, interference with visibility, bad tires, wheel and rim defects, braking system defects, steering system defects, suspension system defects, exhaust system defects, coupling system defects, and cargo problems.



- iv. Pre-trip/enroute/post-trip inspection procedures.
- v) Reporting findings.

18. Hazardous materials. Knowledge of the following:

- i. What constitutes hazardous material requiring an endorsement to transport;
- ii. Classes of hazardous materials;
- iii. Labeling/placarding requirements; and
- iv. Need for specialized training as a prerequisite to receiving the endorsement and transporting hazardous cargoes.

19. Mountain driving. Practices that are important when driving upgrade and downgrade, including:

- i. Selecting a safe speed;
- ii. Selecting the right gear; and
- iii. Proper braking techniques.

20. Fatigue and awareness. Practices that are important to staying alert and safe while driving, including:

- i. Being prepared to drive;
- ii. What to do when driving to avoid fatigue;
- iii. What to do when sleepy while driving; and
- iv. What to do when becoming ill while driving.

B. Air brakes. All CMV drivers operating vehicles equipped with air brakes must have knowledge of the following 7 areas:

- 1. General air brake system nomenclature;
- 2. The dangers of contaminated air supply (dirt, moisture, and oil);
- 3. Implications of severed or disconnected air lines between the power unit and the trailer(s);
- 4. Implications of low air pressure readings;
- 5. Procedures to conduct safe and accurate pre-trip inspections, including knowledge about:
  - i. Automatic fail-safe devices;
  - ii. System monitoring devices; and
  - iii. Low pressure warning alarms.
- 6. Procedures for conducting en route and post-trip inspections of air-actuated brake systems, including:
  - i. Ability to detect defects that may cause the system to fail;
  - ii. Tests that indicate the amount of air loss from the braking system within a specified period, with and without the engine running; and



- iii. Tests that indicate the pressure levels at which the low air pressure warning devices and the tractor protection valve should activate.
7. General operating practices and procedures, including:
- i. Proper braking techniques;
  - ii. Antilock brakes;
  - iii. Emergency stops; and
  - iv. Parking brake.

C. Combination vehicles. All CMV drivers operating combination vehicles must have knowledge of the following 3 areas:

- 1. Coupling and uncoupling—The procedures for proper coupling and uncoupling a tractor to a semi-trailer;
- 2. Vehicle inspection—The objectives and proper procedures that are unique for performing vehicle safety inspections on combination vehicles; and
- 3. General operating practices and procedures, including:
  - i. Safely operating combination vehicles; and
  - ii. Air brakes.

### **§ 383.113: Required Skills**

A. Pre-trip vehicle inspection skills. Applicants for a CDL must possess the following basic pre-trip vehicle inspection skills for the vehicle class that the driver operates or expects to operate:

- 1. All test vehicles. Applicants must be able to identify each safety-related part on the vehicle and explain what needs to be inspected to ensure a safe operating condition of each part, including:
  - i. Engine compartment;
  - ii. Cab/engine start;
  - iii. Steering;
  - iv. Suspension;
  - v. Brakes;
  - vi. Wheels;
  - vii. Side of vehicle;
  - viii. Rear of vehicle; and
  - ix. Special features of tractor trailer, school bus, or coach/transit bus, if this type of vehicle is being used for the test.
- 2. Air brake equipped test vehicles. Applicants must demonstrate the following skills with respect to inspection and operation of air brakes:



- i. Locate and verbally identify air brake operating controls and monitoring devices;
- ii. Determine the motor vehicle's brake system condition for proper adjustments and that air system connections between motor vehicles have been properly made and secured;
- iii. Inspect the low pressure warning device(s) to ensure that they will activate in emergency situations;
- iv. With the engine running, make sure that the system maintains an adequate supply of compressed air;
- v. Determine that required minimum air pressure build up time is within acceptable limits and that required alarms and emergency devices automatically deactivate at the proper pressure level; and
- vi. Operationally check the brake system for proper performance.

B. Basic vehicle control skills. All applicants for a CDL must possess and demonstrate the following basic motor vehicle control skills for the vehicle class that the driver operates or expects to operate:

1. Ability to start, warm up, and shut down the engine;
2. Ability to put the motor vehicle in motion and accelerate smoothly, forward and backward;
3. Ability to bring the motor vehicle to a smooth stop;
4. Ability to back the motor vehicle in a straight line, and check path and clearance while backing;
5. Ability to position the motor vehicle to negotiate safely and then make left and right turns;
6. Ability to shift as required and select appropriate gear for speed and highway conditions; and
7. Ability to back along a curved path.

C. Safe on-road driving skills. All applicants for a CDL must possess and demonstrate the following safe on-road driving skills for their vehicle class:

1. Ability to use proper visual search methods;
2. Ability to signal appropriately when changing direction in traffic;
3. Ability to adjust speed to the configuration and condition of the roadway, weather and visibility conditions, traffic conditions, and motor vehicle, cargo and driver conditions;
4. Ability to choose a safe gap for changing lanes, passing other vehicles, as well as for crossing or entering traffic;



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5. Ability to position the motor vehicle correctly before and during a turn to prevent other vehicles from passing on the wrong side, as well as to prevent problems caused by off-tracking;
6. Ability to maintain a safe following distance depending on the condition of the road, visibility, and vehicle weight;
7. Ability to adjust operation of the motor vehicle to prevailing weather conditions including speed selection, braking, direction changes, and following distance to maintain control; and
8. Ability to observe the road and the behavior of other motor vehicles, particularly before changing speed and direction.

D. Test area . Skills tests shall be conducted in on-street conditions or under a combination of on-street and off-street conditions.

E. Simulation technology. A State may utilize simulators to perform skills testing, but under no circumstances as a substitute for the required testing in on-street conditions.