



May 2023

The Federal Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986 mandated new requirements for the testing and licensing of commercial motor vehicle operators. While detailed information on these requirements may be found in the Commercial Driver's Manual (PUB 223), this Fact Sheet will provide you with a brief overview of the CDL program as a whole.

WHO MUST HAVE A COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE (CDL)?

Anyone who drives a commercial motor vehicle. The definition of a commercial motor vehicle is:

- a) a combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating of 26,001 or more pounds, provided the vehicle being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating;
- b) a single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 or more pounds;
- c) a vehicle designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver;
- d) a school bus; or
- e) any vehicle that is transporting hazardous materials and is required to be placarded in accordance with State and Federal regulations.

Commercial motor vehicles do not include:

- a) implements of husbandry;
- b) any motor home or recreational trailer operated solely for personal use; or
- c) motorized construction equipment, including, but not limited to, motorscrapers, backhoes, motorgraders, compactors, excavators, tractors, trenchers and bulldozers.

WHO MUST SUBMIT A SELF-CERTIFICATION FORM?

Every driver who currently has a commercial driver's license, as well as every driver applying for a commercial learner's permit, must self-certify the type of driving in which they operate or expect to operate in i.e., Non-excepted Interstate; Non-excepted Intrastate; Excepted Interstate; or Excepted Intrastate. The self-certification process will identify commercial drivers that operate in Non-excepted transportation, therefore identifying which drivers are required to submit a copy of their valid Medical Examiner's Certificate to PennDOT.

ARE THERE ANY EXEMPTIONS FROM THE CDL PROGRAM?

Yes, the following persons are not required to obtain a CDL in order to drive a specified commercial motor vehicle:

- a) a firefighter who has a certificate of authorization from his fire chief while operating fire or emergency vehicles registered to the fire department; Drivers responding to provide "direct assistance" to an "emergency" meeting the definitions in [49 CFR 390.5](#) and declared by FMCSA or a governor, are exempt from applicable regulations in *all States on their route to the emergency*, even though those States may not be involved in the emergency or stated in the declaration of emergency.
- b) a driver of a farm vehicle which is controlled and operated by a farmer and used exclusively to transport agricultural products, farm machinery, or farm supplies to or from a farm owned or operated by the owner of the farm vehicle. The farm vehicle may not be used in common or contract carriage. A Pennsylvania farm vehicle may be operated anywhere within the Commonwealth but an out of state farm vehicle may only be operated within 150 miles of the farm;
- c) active duty military personnel, personnel on full-time National Guard duty, personnel on inactive National Guard duty training or part-time National Guard training and National Guard military technicians who are required to wear military uniforms while operating equipment owned or operated by the Department of Defense.

WHAT ARE THE CLASSES OF COMMERCIAL DRIVER LICENSES?

In accordance with the licensing requirements of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act, the license classifications are:

- CLASS A - combination vehicle with a gross combination weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more, provided the gross vehicle weight rating of the vehicle being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.
- CLASS B - single vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds.
- CLASS C - single vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 26,001 pounds if the vehicle is: transporting hazardous materials requiring placarding; is designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver; or, is a school bus. Class C CDL must include a S, P, or H endorsement.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIRED ENDORSEMENTS?

The operation of certain vehicles also require the drivers to possess commercial endorsements in addition to possessing the proper class of license.

- endorsement H authorizes the driver to operate a vehicle transporting hazardous materials requiring placarding
- endorsement N authorizes the driver to operate tank vehicles
- endorsement X hazardous materials and tank vehicle (H,N)
- endorsement P authorizes the driver to operate vehicles carrying passengers
- endorsement S authorizes the driver to operate a school bus (a School Bus endorsement card will be issued annually)
- endorsement T authorizes the driving of double and triple trailers
- restriction L restricts the driver to vehicles **NOT** equipped with air brakes
- restriction M restricts the driver from a class A bus
- restriction N restricts the driver from a class A or B bus
- restriction E restricts the driver from driving manual transmission commercial vehicles
- restriction K limits a driver to only operate in intrastate commerce
- restriction O restricts a driver from driving a truck tractor/semi-trailer combination vehicles with a fifth wheel connection
- restriction Z restricts a driver from driving a full air-brake equipped vehicle

WHAT TESTS DO I NEED TO TAKE?

You will need to pass the **Knowledge Tests** that are required for the class of license, restriction, and endorsements you wish to possess. A general knowledge test for the Class A or Class B and C license must be successfully completed by all CDL applicants. The information needed to pass these tests is contained in the CDL driver's manual. This manual is available on our website at www.dmv.pa.gov. Please read and study this manual carefully.

License	Knowledge Test (written)	Entry-Level Driver Training	*Skills Test
Class A	70 Questions	YES (initial and upgrade)	YES
Class B	50 questions	YES (initial and upgrade)	YES
Class C	50 questions	NO	YES
Passenger Endorsement	20 questions	YES (for initial only)	YES (in bus)
School Bus Endorsement	25 questions (passenger endorsement required)	YES (for initial only)	YES (must be in a school bus)
Doubles/Triples Endorsement	20 questions	NO	NO
Tank Vehicle Endorsement	20 questions	NO	NO
Hazardous Materials Endorsement	30 question	YES (for initial only)	NO
L/Z Air Brake Restriction Removal	25 questions	NO	YES (in vehicles equipped with air brakes)
C/N Restriction Removal	NO	NO	YES (in a class B bus)
E Restriction Removal	NO	NO	YES
K Restriction Removal	NO	NO	NO
O Restriction Removal	NO	NO	YES

PennDOT offers knowledge tests in multiple languages for both written and audio format. HAZMAT knowledge test is English only.

* SKILLS TESTS:

After obtaining knowledge test authorization(s) and passing the required **knowledge test(s)**, you will also need to take a **skills test** in the class and type of vehicle you intend to drive. The skills test includes a pre-trip inspection, and off-the-road maneuver, and vehicle parking exercise. Once again, a more detailed description of this test can be found in the CDL Driver's Manual.

Skills testing cannot be taken until 15 days after the knowledge testing is passed and a permit is issued. However, you may call the number below to schedule skills testing immediately after passing a knowledge test or schedule on-line.

Please note: If Entry-Level Driver Training is required it must be completed prior to taking your skills test. For more information on Entry-Level Driver training please visit <https://tpr.fmcsa.dot.gov/>.

For more information, please feel free to visit our website at: www.dmv.pa.gov
or call 717-412-5300

you may also mail inquires to:

PennDOT CDL Unit PO Box 68679 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17106-8679