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Road testing every driver.

To road test or not to road test? That is the question. Some organizations choose to accept the driver applicants' commercial drivers license (CDL) in lieu of a road test, as allowed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR). Other companies choose to road test some driver applicants based on the background and experience of the applicant. In fact, the best practice is to road test all driver applicants as part of driver qualification.

Why road test a driver who has many years of driving experience or has been issued a CDL based on a driving examination by an approved testing agency? You are entrusting your truck, cargo, the lives of others and your reputation on the driving skills of your drivers. Realizing a driver has inadequate skills or is too aggressive after an accident is too late. Consider the following:

- Many drivers pick up bad habits over the years, such as: following too closely, not scanning their mirrors, driving too fast for conditions or completing superficial inspections.
- Many experienced drivers have not kept up with current best driving practices. They learned how to drive many years ago, but safety guidelines have changed and some drivers have not kept up.
- Some drivers may not have the physical ability to operate a truck safely, even though they present a current medical certificate. Eyesight, strength and agility may have deteriorated since the last physical, or the physical may not have been performed correctly.
- Could the driver be looking for a new job because a past employer let him or her go due to aggressive driving or incompetence?
- Background checks are helpful, but do you trust the word of a stranger regarding the capabilities of the prospective driver?
- Conducting a road test will help identify drivers who, although experienced, cannot operate a vehicle safely, drive aggressively or do not utilize safe driving techniques.



Is your driver applicant capable of driving this vehicle safely? A thorough road test will help answer that question.

By road testing every driver, the company is also sending a message to the driver that safe driving is a value that is expected of all its drivers. It is also an opportunity for the organization to evaluate defensive driving practices. Safe driving is more than committing no driving errors; it is also making allowances for other drivers and their driving errors. It is what sets professional drivers apart.

A road test allows the company to set the expectations for employment and start laying the groundwork for long-term tenure with the company. The one-on-one interaction between the prospective driver and the tester is the perfect opportunity to have a candid discussion regarding the driver's career. Take this opportunity to not just assess driving skills but also to evaluate how he or she will fit into the organization.

Road testing best practices.

- Road test every driver. Road testing some drivers, but not others, may lead to claims of discrimination.
- The road test should take place before the driver attends orientation and is used as another screening tool.

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You've known him since high school. He's driven trucks since then. He lives in the next town and you've heard he doesn't drink. But does that mean he's a competent, safe driver?

Take the extra time to road test every driver. Professional, safe drivers will understand why you test and appreciate your commitment to safety.



- The road test should be conducted driving equipment similar to what they will be operating. If a driver is being hired to drive a dump truck he or she should be tested in a similar dump truck.
- All tests should be carried out consistently. Establish a set road test process and course. A well-designed road test should take the driver through a process that can challenge his or her skills as a professional driver and provide the organization with a good evaluation. FMCSR 391.31(c) identifies a list of procedures and maneuvers that you should cover in a road test.
- Design your evaluation form to coincide with your specific road test. It should outline the key items being evaluated to ensure the evaluator covers each topic. It should be signed and dated by the evaluator. It should be retained in the driver's qualification file.
- Evaluators should fully understand their role and be competent to properly evaluate a driver.
- Do not hire drivers who do not demonstrate adequate skills or who drive aggressively.
- If a driver has generally good skills but requires some refinement, provide him or her with training and then reevaluate his or her competence before you put the driver on the road.

FMCSR Part 391.31(c) — Road test.

The road test must be of sufficient duration to enable the person who gives it to evaluate the skill of

the person who takes it at handling the commercial motor vehicle, and associated equipment, that the motor carriers intends to assign to him/her. As a minimum, the person who takes the test must be tested, while operating the type of commercial motor vehicle the motor carrier intends to assign him/her, on his/her skill at performing each of the following operations:

- The pre-trip inspection required by §392.7 of this subchapter
- Coupling and uncoupling of combination units, if the equipment he/she may drive includes combination units
- Placing the commercial motor vehicle in operation
- Use of the commercial motor vehicle's controls and emergency equipment
- Operating the commercial motor vehicle in traffic and while passing other motor vehicles
- Turning the commercial motor vehicle
- Braking and slowing the commercial motor vehicle by means other than braking
- Backing and parking the commercial motor vehicle



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Certificate of Drivers Road Test

Instructions: If the road test is successfully completed, the person who gave it shall complete a certificate of the driver's road test. The original or copy of the certificate shall be retained in the employing motor carrier's driver qualification file of the person examined and a copy given to the person who was examined. (49 CFR 391.31 (e)(f)(g))

Driver's Name _____

Social Security Number _____

Operator's or Chauffeur's License Number _____

State _____

Type of Power Unit _____

Type of Trailer(s) _____

If passenger carrier, type of bus _____

This is to certify that the above-named driver was given a road test under my supervision on _____, 20____, consisting of approximately ____ miles of driving.

It is my considered opinion that this driver possesses sufficient driving skill to operate safely the type of commercial motor vehicle listed above.

(Signature of Examiner)

(Title)

(Organization and Address of Examiner)

This document was obtained from A Motor Carrier's Guide to Improving Highway Safety, FMCSA, December 2009.