



Training for experienced truck drivers.

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To safely operate a commercial motor vehicle, a driver must possess core knowledge and skills. These competencies are typically acquired during training conducted at a truck driving school and/or by the driver's first employer. In many cases drivers have received no or limited training, and the drivers have acquired knowledge and skills on their own as they have moved throughout their career.

It's poor practice to assume an experienced driver is competent. Many experienced drivers lack some of the skills needed to safely perform their duties. Good organizations typically assess an applicant driver through interviews, written tests and road tests. However, existing drivers' faults can be identified through accidents, cargo damage and roadside violations.

With new or existing drivers, it's the organization's responsibility to ensure the driver is competent. Training is a method of improving a driver's competency. Evidence of training is also valuable in defending your organization against claims of negligence in severe accidents. All training should be documented and record the date, topics covered, resources used and distributed, and a list of attendees. Attendees should sign the record.

New driver orientation.

New, experienced drivers typically need 8 to 16 hours of initial training before they begin transporting loads for a new company. The length and type of training is dependent on their individual knowledge and skills as well as the uniqueness of your operations. A driver orientation checklist should be created to guide the process and document each topic covered.

Typical topics for this checklist can include:

- A review of your organization's general policies, procedures and rules, as well as your organization's commitment to safety and consequences for unsafe operation
- Safety procedures that are unique to your operations or customer requirements (e.g., load securement and protection, temperature monitoring, security measures, personal protective equipment)
- General defensive driving techniques including speed and space management, backing, lane changes, driver attention, fatigue management, etc.
- Specific skills and knowledge the driver is lacking that are identified during the hiring process
- Regulatory required training such as HAZMAT

Post-incident individual training.

A driver who's involved in or receives any of the following should receive individual post-incident training:

- At-fault or preventable accident, cargo damage or injury
- Any moving or roadside inspection violation
- Any observed violation of safe work rules or safe driving practices

These incidents indicate a lack of knowledge or skills to operate safely, and training should be provided to reduce the possibility of a recurrence. This training should take place as soon as possible after the incident and be documented. Drivers should be monitored closely for a period after the training to ensure they understand and follow proper procedures.

Periodic driver training.

Policies, procedures and regulations change throughout the year. Drivers can develop bad habits that lead to unsafe driving or inadequate compliance with regulations. Drivers need periodic training throughout the year to ensure their knowledge and skills remain adequate. All-driver safety meetings are standard, but small group or one-on-one training is equally effective as long as the same topics are covered with every driver. The frequency of periodic training is dependent on many factors, but three to six meetings a year is typical unless a critical issue requires immediate training. Typical topics may include:

- New regulations, policies and procedures
- Organization accidents, injuries or other claims; discussion of trends and corrective measures

- Defensive driving topics
- Organization FMCSA SMS BASIC scores and violations; discussion of trends and corrective actions
- Regulatory required training such as HAZMAT

Training methods and effectiveness.

People learn in a variety of ways that generally fall into two categories: passive and active. Passive learning includes reading, listening to words or looking at pictures. Active learning includes participating in a discussion or completing an exercise or demonstration. While passive learning methods may work for some acquisition of knowledge, active learning is generally more effective. Most organizations use a combination of both methods. Here are two examples:

Proper inspection of trailers	Changes in hours-of-service regulations
<i>Passive</i>	<i>Passive</i>
Have the driver read your vehicle inspection policy.	Provide the driver with a written overview of changes to the regulations.
Explain your policy to the driver.	Explain the new changes to the driver.
<i>Active</i>	<i>Active</i>
Have drivers inspect a trailer explaining to you what they are looking for while completing the inspection form.	Have the driver relog the last week of driving following the new rules. Discuss the changes that were made.
Set up a trailer to inspect with defects or notes at inspection points. Require the driver to inspect the trailer. Discuss any missed items.	Create a logging exercise depicting a full two weeks of duty. Have the driver log the trips using the new hours of service and identify where violations of driving and on-duty time exist.

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