



Everything Needed For Inside and Outside Your Commercial Truck For Compliance.

1. Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

You must always have your Commercial Driver's License (CDL) on the road. The consequences for operating a commercial vehicle without one - whether invalid or simply missing during an inspection - are steep. More importantly, you risk losing your driver's license for a minimum of 90 days (or more) and up to a year in jail.

2. Medical Certificate

A "DOT Card" or "Med Card" is a medical certificate that commercial drivers must obtain. You must pass a DOT medical exam to qualify for a CDL. Only a licensed medical examiner who appears on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration National Registry can issue it. On average, the certificate is valid for two years. However, depending on your situation, such as high blood pressure, you may need to pass it on a more frequent basis to monitor the condition.

It's important to note that as the driver, you must report any new or renewed medical card to your state DMV by physically visiting the DMV office. Your carrier does not likely do this for you. The DMV then links your card electronically to your CDL. However, it's a good idea to carry the physical certificate of your Med Card on your person at all times, as delays and clerical errors at the DMV can prevent your card from being linked to your CDL promptly.

There are unique situations when you won't have a valid medical certificate - for example, [obtaining an exemption](#) or passing a skill performance evaluation (SPE) due to an impairment. If that applies, keep that documentation in your cab and answer any questions during an inspection. Note that records related to alcohol and drug testing are also helpful.

3. Title and Registration

Once inspectors have validated that you are licensed to operate a commercial vehicle, they want to ensure that your truck and trailer are properly registered. This becomes even more critical if you are moving between states. Keep relevant paperwork on top of the pile because, in addition to inspections, you will need it in emergencies like moving violations and accidents.

While most states can quickly run your VIN to check the vehicle status, keeping the truck and trailer titles and registration on hand can be helpful, so it is fast and easy to prove who owns the equipment. If you don't have the title, which is common when financing a vehicle, other types of documentation like an MV-POA (Motor Vehicle Power of Attorney) can suffice. Check with your state Department of Transportation for details. However, if you are running in [Oregon](#), you are required to carry a paper copy.

4. Motor Carrier Authority

All interstate carriers and trucks must have DOT numbers. If you run under your own authority, you need to have your [Motor Carrier Authority \(MC Authority\)](#). Your certificate is your proof of DOT registration and your permit to transport or arrange for the transport of certain federally-regulated commodities that others own.

5. Proof of Insurance

Several types of insurance are either recommended or required as an Owner-Operator. While inspectors are primarily interested in commercial liability insurance if you damage property or injure someone, there are other critical types of coverage such as cargo, bobtail, and occupational accident insurance, to name a few.

Owner-operators with their own authority should speak with an experienced agent specializing in the trucking industry for detailed recommendations.

Keeping proof of insurance in your document binder is critical for inspections and in the worst-case scenario of a crash or another type of emergency. Be sure to stay on top of insurance expiration dates for the different types of insurance as they can vary.

6. Cab Card

The cab card is a document serving as permission to travel through all member states. Think of it like a “passport” through different jurisdictions. The state where your truck is registered issues your cab card, meaning that regulations vary. For example, you might need to carry a hard copy of your cab card in some states, while others permit a digital version. Either way, ensure that you are using an official version that includes the details required by law.

Keep in mind that there are a handful of reasons why you might be exempt from the cab card requirement, but think carefully about opting out of the program. Without it, you may have to apply for entry to every state you pass through.

7. 2290 Excise Form

You must file tax form 2290 if you own or you operate a heavy vehicle with a gross weight of 55,000 pounds or more. If you have a truck you use for 5,000 miles or less - 7,500 for farm trucks - you are required to file a return, but you won't need to pay the tax. Essentially, tax form 2290 is a Federal Excise Tax imposed on vehicles - with a gross weight of 55,000 pounds or more - operating in public highways.

8. Daily Log

The objective of the [hours-of-service HOS\) regulations](#) is to ensure your safety and the safety of others on the road with you. Every driver must log HOS, including time spent driving, resting, and other. Until 2019, drivers logged them physically, but now everything is done electronically with the introduction of [Electronic Logging Devices \(ELDs\)](#). That makes inspections simpler, as your

hours-of-service data is collected automatically for the inspector to download.

Always ensure that your device is on and working properly. Sometimes, the device can malfunction and it is required to keep 8 + paper logs with you in the event you need a backup. You must also keep your ELD instruction and malfunction guide in your truck.

9. International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA) Certificate

Fuel prices vary from state to state - sometimes significantly. It makes sense that drivers would make a point to fill up where prices are low before traveling through higher-priced locations. Right? Unfortunately, however, this is not the case. States use fuel taxes for road-related expenses, so fuel taxes are shared based on how many miles you travel within a state. States have agreed to work together to ensure that taxes get assessed and paid equitably.

Your [IFTA Certificate](#) makes it so you don't have to file paperwork with every jurisdiction you travel through. You must renew it annually and once you do, it comes with a sticker that changes annually to be placed on the outside of your truck for easy visibility that yours is valid. You must also carry the proper documentation as proof at all times.

10. Safety Certificates

Regular safety inspections intend to keep you and others safe on the road. That's why inspectors always look at [safety certificates](#) for your truck and trailer. The most important certificate is the DOT annual inspection, which is your official evidence that your vehicle is in good working condition and you as the driver are fit to operate it.

In addition to checking for timely safety inspections, inspectors will review documentation to validate that the individual who conducted the safety inspection is appropriately [qualified](#). The best practice is to keep track of the inspections you perform before every trip and any that third parties complete.

11. Bill of Lading

It's not enough to show that you are the truck owner (or you are driving it with the owner's permission). An inspector will also want proof of ownership for the goods you are transporting. Your Bill of Lading takes care of this requirement by providing details on the type and amount of cargo in transport, where it came from and where it's going. Take special care to obtain the signatures you need at every stage of the process to prevent mishaps with an inspection.

12. Lease Agreement

If you lease onto a carrier, it's a good idea to keep your lease agreement with you as well. This may or may not be required to prove during an inspection. The document can vary in length and should detail the lease terms.

13. EPA Emissions Certificates

The rules around vehicle emissions have gotten much more stringent over the past 15 years to curb poor air quality. Big rigs have always been an area of concern for the EPA, and as a response, a variety of requirements were put in place to reduce related pollution. You may need to produce your [EPA emissions certificate](#) during an inspection, so it is wise to have it on hand.

14. State Permits

Various states may also require you to have additional permits, largely related to heavy vehicle usage tax. For example, [New York imposes a highway use tax \(HUT\)](#) on motor carriers for certain vehicles on certain public highways. [Oregon](#) and [Kentucky](#) are two states with similar policies. Take the time to research if and where you might need additional permits and pursue the requirements for these permits to ensure compliance.

15. Hazmat Paperwork

If you are transporting hazardous materials, you have extra paperwork to collect. That includes any relevant permits, along with the detailed shipping

papers. In addition to what you carry and how much, hazmat paperwork explains what to do in an emergency. First responders rely on those details to ensure everyone's safety if something goes wrong.

16. Safety Equipment.

Emergency Equipment on all Power Units – 49 CFR 393.95

Pursuant to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) at 49 CFR 393.95, each truck, truck tractor, and bus (except those towed in driveaway-towaway operations) must be equipped with the following:

- Fire extinguishers.
- Spare fuses.
- Warning devices for stopped vehicles.

The purpose of this article is to further explain the requirements and restrictions of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations for Emergency Equipment on all Power Units at 49 CFR 393.95.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS:

- If the power unit is used to transport a placardable amount of hazardous material, then it must be equipped with a fire extinguisher with an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 10 B:C or more.
- If the power unit is not used to transport hazardous material, then it must be equipped with either:
 - A fire extinguisher with an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 5 B"C or more; or,
 - Two fire extinguishers, each of which has an Underwriters' Laboratories rating of 4 B:C or more.
- Each fire extinguisher must:
 - Be labeled or marked by the manufacturer with its Underwriters' Laboratories rating.

- Be designed, constructed, and maintained to permit visual determination of whether it is fully charged.
- Be filled and located to be readily accessible for use.
- Be securely mounted.
- Use an extinguishing agent that does not need protection from freezing.
- Use an extinguishing agent that complies with the toxicity provisions of the USEPA Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP) regulations pursuant to 40 CFR 82, Subpart G.
- The requirement for a fire extinguisher does not apply to the driven unit in a driveaway-towaway operation.

SPARE FUSES:

- If fuses are needed to operate any required parts or accessories of the power unit, at least one spare fuse is required for each type/size of fuse needed.
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WARNING DEVICES FOR STOPPED VEHICLES:

- Options include:
 - Three bidirectional emergency reflective triangles that conform to the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 125, § 571.125; or
 - At least 6 fusees or 3 liquid-burning flares. Vehicle must have as many additional fusees or liquid-burning flares as are necessary to satisfy the requirement of §392.22 – Emergency Signals; Stopped Commercial Motor Vehicles.
 - Other warning devices may be used in addition to, but not in lieu of the required warning devices. Other warning devices must not decrease the effectiveness of the required warning devices. Red flags, if used, shall not be less than 12 inches square and able to maintain an upright position.
- Liquid-burning flares, fusees, oil lanterns, or any signal produced by a flame shall not be carried on:

- Any commercial motor vehicle transporting Division 1.1, 1.2, & 1.3 (Explosives).
 - Any cargo tank motor vehicle (loaded or empty) used for the transportation of Division 2.1 (Flammable Gas) or Class 3 (Flammable Liquid).
 - Any commercial motor vehicle using compressed gas as a motor fuel.
- Requirements for fusees and liquid-burning flares:
 - Each fusee shall be capable of burning for 30 minutes.
 - Each liquid-burning flare shall contain enough fuel to burn continuously for at least 60 minutes.
 - fusees and liquid-burning flares shall conform to the requirements of Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
 - Each fusees and liquid-burning flare shall be marked with the UL symbol per UL 912.

17. DOT Requirements For Lettering Outside Of A Truck:

A motor carrier displays two things on both sides of each power unit:

(1) the carrier's legal name or a single trade name of the business that owns or controls operations, and

(2) the carrier's U.S. DOT number.

- Must Be 2 Inches in Height (2 inches is the minimum required size we recommend a minimum of 3 inches).
- Your lettering must be visible from at least 50 feet away.
- Your decal color must contrast with the color of the vehicle.
- Your us DOT and MC number needs to be displayed on both sides of your commercial vehicle.