



Truck Driver, Heavy/Light and Tractor Trailer (CDL-A/CDL-B)

Truck drivers are a constant presence on the nation’s highway system. At some point, almost everything we purchase is transported by a truck. Industrial truck and tractor operators work at warehouses, storage yards, factories, and industrial sites.

Heavy truck drivers begin their job by reading bills of lading and other instructions to determine how to transport cargo. They also read and interpret maps to determine the best route. Before starting the trip, truck drivers must inspect their vehicle for safety: brakes, windshield wipers, and lights must be in good condition; safety equipment—flares, traffic cones, and fire extinguishers—must be on board.

Light truck drivers, often called pick-up and deliver or P&D drivers, are the most common type of delivery driver. They drive small trucks or vans from distribution centers to delivery locations. Drivers make deliveries based on a set schedule. Some drivers stop only at the distribution center once, in the morning, and make many stops throughout the day. Others make multiple trips between the distribution center and delivery locations.

The work of a truck driver is repetitive and requires physical stamina. On average, truck drivers log 2,000 miles per week and may be gone from home one to three weeks at a time. They may lift heavy materials, carry heavy loads, and spend long periods of time in awkward and uncomfortable positions.

The hours a truck driver may work are regulated by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrative. They have daily and weekly work limits as well as required time off after working for a period. They often work on nights, weekends, and holidays.

Indiana Wage Information

	Hourly Wages Entry	Hourly Wages Median
Heavy Truck	\$16.06	\$19.32
Light Truck	\$10.28	\$13.92

Job Outlook in Indiana

	Long Term	Short Term
Heavy Truck	10.45%	6.12%
Light Truck	11.4%	5.0%

Job Duties

- Load and unload cargo
- Drive long distances
- Report to dispatcher any incidents encountered on the road
- Follow all applicable traffic laws
- Inspect trailer before and after trip; record any defects found
- Keep a log of all activities
- Keep truck and equipment clean and in good working condition
- Use maps to establish routes and use devices, like a GPS, to determine what routes use the least amount of fuel

Important Qualities

Hand-eye coordination - must be able to coordinate legs, hands, and eyes well in order to drive safely

Hearing ability – must have good hearing; federal regulations require that a driver be able to hear a forced whisper in one ear at five feet (with or without the use of a hearing aid)

Physical health – must be in good physical health; federal regulations do not allow for truck drivers to have a medical condition that may interfere with their ability to operate a truck

Visual ability - must be able to pass vision tests; federal regulations require a driver to have at least 20/40 vision with a 70-degree field of vision in each eye and the ability to distinguish the colors on a traffic light

Skills and Knowledge

Technical

- Controlling operations of equipment or systems
- Watching gauges, dials or other indicators to make sure a machine is functioning properly
- Determining causes of and solutions for operating problems
- Time management
- Repairing machines or systems using the needed tools
- Principles and methods for moving people and goods
- Customer service knowledge needed for delivery services

English Language Arts

- Read and understand work-related materials
- Read, write, and understand the English language fluently

Math

- Arithmetic for tallying mileage and hours; determining weight distribution

Certification and Advancement

All long-haul truck drivers must have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL-A). Many light truck drivers require a CDL-B certification. Qualifications for obtaining a CDL vary by state but generally include passing both a knowledge and driving test. In Indiana, CDL applicants must provide a valid United States Department of Transportation physical examination form. To obtain certification, you must have a valid driver's license and be able to pass a drug screen. In Indiana, you must be at least eighteen (18) years old if you will be transporting property within state lines, or at least twenty-one (21) years old if you will be transporting people. You must also pass a knowledge examination and a driving skills test in a vehicle representative of the class of CDL that you will receive, as well as complete a Department of Transportation physical. Indiana also requires documentation to prove the applicant's name, date of birth, Social Security number, lawful status in the United States, and Indiana residency. Drivers aged 18-20 are allowed to drive only in their state of residence. Most trucking companies prefer their drivers have at least 2 years of related experience.

Many heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers work as delivery drivers or as motor coach drivers before joining this occupation. Drivers can get endorsements to their CDL that show their ability to drive a specialized type of vehicle. Truck drivers transporting hazardous materials (HAZMAT) must have a hazardous materials endorsement (H). Getting this endorsement requires an additional knowledge test and a background check. Specialized licenses usually result in greater pay. Federal regulations require testing truck drivers for drug or alcohol abuse with random testing while on duty. In addition, truck drivers can have their CDL suspended if they are convicted of a felony involving the use of a motor vehicle or while driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. States have the right to refuse to issue a CDL to anyone who has had a CDL suspended by another state. Individual employers can determine if they will hire a driver with a previous conviction.

How can YOU get involved?

The world of work relies on the foundational skills students acquire in your classrooms and/or programs!

- Know your students'/clients' interests and career goals
- Affirm the value of the skills/hobbies students demonstrate both in and outside of the classroom
- Infuse your classroom culture and/or meetings with career-minded activities
- Provide time to make connections between the material learned in adult education or workshops and students' daily lives/career aspirations
- Know the basic job descriptions and training requirements of in-demand occupations in your area
- Know which WorkINDiana programs are available in your region
- Know the processes for referring students to postsecondary or on-the-job training
- Post resources where students can find more information about further education/training and careers

Sources and Further Information:

www.bls.gov/ooh

www.iseek.org

www.fmcsa.dot.gov

www.in.gov/bmv/2854.htm

*Last Updated July 2016