

We Care About You!

The Pennsylvania Towing Association (PTA) would like to make you aware of some of the rules and regulations effecting our industry. We encourage our members to adhere to all the laws and follow the guidelines provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We want you to keep safety in the forefront of everything you do when performing your job. It would be impossible to address every towing law however we wanted to answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

The PTA realizes that many trucks built today do not have the same load capacity as trucks built in the past. Specifically those designed for normal passenger vehicles and light trucks. The average rollback used today for passenger vehicles and light trucks will have an average Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of approximately 19,500 lbs. with a curb weight (Unladen Weight) of 12,000 lbs., allowing you to haul up to 7,500 lbs. legally. As we move up in the various weight classifications the calculations as stated above for load capacities will increase accordingly. You do not want to exceed the recommended load capacity.

For the purpose of traveling only within the State of Pennsylvania (**Intrastate Commerce**) you will be subjected to same weight limitations or by the weight limitations noted on the manufacturers specifications commonly found inside the driver's door.

When traveling outside the borders of Pennsylvania (**Interstate Commerce**) you will be expected to adhere to the proper hauling weights as described above. In addition you will be expected to have a registration certificate indicating the gross GVWR. Most other states do not recognize RT Tags (Repair & Towing) therefore you may be subjected to some hefty fines.

[Click here to learn more about the Various Registration Fees MV-70S \(11/15\)](#)

In both cases **Interstate or Intrastate** you cannot exceed the gross vehicle weight rating. It is recommended that you determine the amount of weight you're hauling before loading and beginning your trip. Please refer to the link we provided, PA Truckers Handbook, PUB-194 for all other weight classifications and weight limitations. This handbook is very informative. You will learn more about Interstate travel and what is required such as:

- USDOT Numbers
- MC Numbers
- IFTA Motor Carriers Road Tax
- UCR Numbers Unified Carrier Registration
- HVUT Heavy Vehicle Use Tax

The following link will take you to the PA Trucker's Handbook (PUB 194), this handbook has most of the information you'll need to operate a truck in Pennsylvania safely.

[Click here to learn more about the PA Trucker's Handbook \(PUB 194\)](#)

[Click here to learn more about Maximum Legal Weights for Trucks in Pennsylvania](#)

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

Operating Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMVs)

There are extensive rules from both the federal government and Pennsylvania governing the operation of commercial motor vehicles for both the driver and the commercial motor vehicle. This page attempts to capture most of the relevant resources for those rules.

What is a Commercial Motor Vehicle?

The U.S. Department of Transportation defines a commercial motor vehicle as a truck or a truck and trailer in combination with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 10,001 pounds or more and is engaged in interstate commerce or is transporting goods that ultimately will cross a state line. In Pennsylvania, if a vehicle is engaged strictly in **intrastate commerce** (it does not cross state borders) then a CMV is a vehicle or vehicle and trailer in combination that has a GVWR of 17,001 pounds or greater.

If you have a vehicle or combination that has a GVWR of more than 10,000 but less than 17,001 pounds that is not registered with the U.S. Department of Transportation for interstate commerce be careful that the truck doesn't cross a state border. Fines can be heavy and police like to watch the main border highways for violators.

Who Needs a Commercial Driver's License (CDL)?

There are a variety of requirements to have a valid license to operate a commercial motor vehicle that depend on the size and type of vehicle and the cargo that is being carried. Below is a synopsis of who needs a CDL to drive what in Pennsylvania.

As a result of the Federal commercial motor vehicle Safety Act of 1986, Pennsylvania established a commercial driver Licensing Program. This program has been developed to improve driver quality, ensure commercial drivers have the skills needed to operate commercial vehicles and to prevent drivers from having more than one driver's license.

You are required to have a CDL if you operate or plan to operate any of the following commercial motor vehicles (CMVs):

- a) A combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 26,001 pounds or more, provided the vehicle being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.
- b) A single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 or more pounds.
- c) A vehicle designed to transport 16 or more persons, including the driver.
- d) A school bus designed to carry 11 passengers or more, including the driver.
- e) Any size vehicle, which transports hazardous materials and is required to be placarded in accordance with federal regulations.
- f) Any size vehicle used in the transportation of any material that requires hazardous materials placards or any quantity of a material listed as a select agent or toxin in 42 CFR 73. Federal regulations through the department of Homeland Security require a background check and fingerprinting for the Hazardous Materials Endorsement.

[Click here to view "When do I need a Commercial Driver's License \(CDL\)" - A Quick Reference Guide](#)

[Click here to view the TRAA Vehicle Identification Guide](#)

[Click here to learn about Operating Hand Held Mobile Devices and Commercial Vehicles.](#)

License Types & Restrictions

In Pennsylvania, driver's licenses are issued specifically for the class and type of vehicle you operate. Therefore, the class of driver's license you should have depends specifically upon the type of vehicle you operate. Generally speaking, the majority of applicants for a Pennsylvania driver's license will be operators of regular passenger vehicles, pick-up trucks or vans.

Classes of Driver's Licenses

Non-commercial Driver's Licenses

CLASS A (minimum age 18): Required to operate any combination of vehicles with a gross weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more, where the vehicle(s) being towed is/are in excess of 10,000 pounds. Example: Recreational Vehicle, when the towing vehicle is rated at 11,000 pounds and the vehicle towed is rated at 15,500 pounds (total combination weight of 26,500 pounds).

CLASS B (minimum age 18): Required to operate any single vehicle rated in excess of 26,000 pounds. Example: Motor homes rated at 26,001 pounds or more.

CLASS C (minimum age 16): A Class C driver's license will be issued to persons 16 years of age or older, who have demonstrated their qualifications to operate any vehicles, except those requiring a Class M qualification, and who do not meet the definitions of Class A or Class B. Any firefighter or member of a rescue or emergency squad who is the holder of a Class C driver's license and who has a certificate of authorization from a fire chief or head of the rescue or emergency squad will be authorized to operate any fire or emergency vehicle registered to that fire department, rescue or emergency squad or municipality (emergency use only). The holder of a Class C license is authorized to drive a motor-driven cycle with an automatic transmission and cylinder capacity of 50 CCs or less or a 3-wheeled motorcycle with an enclosed cab.

CLASS M (minimum age 16): A Class M driver's license will be issued to those persons 16 years of age or older who have demonstrated their ability to operate a motorcycle or motor-driven cycle. If a person is qualified to operate only a motorcycle or motor-driven cycle, he/she will be issued a Class M driver's license. If you test on a motor-driven cycle, an "8" restriction will appear on your driver's license. This restriction prohibits you from operating a motorcycle. If you test on a 3-wheeled motorcycle, a "9" restriction will appear on your driver's license. This restriction prohibits you from operating a 2-wheeled motorcycle.

License Restrictions

Under Section 1512 of the PA Vehicle Code, the Department has the authority whenever there is good cause to add restrictions suitable to the licensee's driving ability with respect to special equipment required to be installed on a motor vehicle or other restrictions applicable to assure the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

Medical Restrictions and their use:

- 1 - License holder must wear corrective lenses when driving (glasses/contacts)
- 2 - Vehicle must be equipped with mirrors on both sides of the vehicle. (dual mirrors)
- 3 - Vehicle must be equipped with an automatic transmission (no manual transmission)
- 4 - Vehicle must be equipped with special equipment (spinner knob, left foot gas pedal, etc.)
- 5 - License holder can only drive during daylight hours sunrise to sunset (no night driving)
- 6 - License holder is considered a Classified driver because of a physical impairment that will not affect ability to drive (missing fingers, missing an arm, etc.)
- 7 - License holder has a Restricted license because of a visual impairment (limited to driving within a limited radius of residence; limited to roads other than freeways; limited to passenger vehicles weighing no more than 10,000 pounds; cannot operate a motorcycle)
- 8 - Driver's M License is restricted to a motor-driven cycle (motorcycle motor cannot be greater than 5 brake horsepower)
- 9 - Driver's M License is restricted from operating a 2-wheel motorcycle
- A - Permit holder is restricted to operating a vehicle equipped with dual controls (right side brake pedal) with a certified driver trainer in the passenger seat.
- Z - Motorcycle learner's permit holder can only operate a motorcycle during daylight hour's sunrise to sunset (no night riding)

Commercial Driver's Licenses

CLASS A (minimum age 18): A Class A license is issued to those persons 18 years of age or older who have demonstrated their qualifications to operate any combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more, provided the gross vehicle weight rating of the vehicle or vehicles being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds. The holder of a Class A license is qualified to operate vehicles for which a Class B or Class C license is issued. Where required, appropriate endorsements must be obtained.

CLASS B (minimum age 18): A Class B license is issued to those persons 18 years of age or older who have demonstrated their qualifications to operate any single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 pounds or more or any such vehicle towing a vehicle having a gross vehicle weight rating of not more than 10,000 pounds. The holder of a Class B license is qualified to operate vehicles for which a Class C license is issued. Where required, appropriate endorsements must be obtained.

CLASS C (minimum age 18): A Class C license is issued to those persons 18 years of age or older who have demonstrated their qualifications to operate any single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of not more than 26,000 pounds or any combination of vehicles, except combination vehicles involving motorcycles, that does not meet the definition of a Class A or Class B vehicle. Where required, appropriate endorsements must be obtained.

NOTE: You must be 21 years of age or older to operate a Commercial Motor Vehicle on an interstate (traveling between two or more states). This applies to ALL classes.
In addition to the CDL classes, there are also special endorsements and restrictions that you must have to drive certain types of commercial vehicles. They are:

Commercial Endorsements

The following authorizations are required when operating vehicles of the type listed:

- H - Authorizes the driver to operate a vehicle transporting hazardous materials.
- N - Authorizes driving tank vehicles.
- P - Authorizes driving vehicles carrying passengers.
- S - Authorizes the driver to operate a school bus.
- T - Authorizes a Class A driver to pull double and triple trailers.
- X - Represents a combination of hazardous materials and tank vehicle endorsements.

Commercial Restrictions

The following restrictions prohibit you from operating certain type vehicles:

- A - Restricts the driver to driving under 49 CFR § 391.62(c) (relating to limited exemptions for intra-city zone drivers).
- E – Prohibits driving a commercial motor vehicle equipped with a manual transmission.
- G - Indicates qualification under 49 CFR § 391.62(e).
- K – Restricts driver to intrastate driving.
- L - Prohibits driving a commercial motor vehicle equipped with air brakes.
- M* – Prohibits driving a class A passenger vehicle. (formerly a “B” restriction)
- N* – Prohibits driving a class A or B passenger vehicle. (formerly a “C” restriction)
- O – Prohibits a Class A driver from driving a truck tractor-trailer combination.
- P – Prohibits driving a commercial motor vehicle bus containing passengers (will appear on commercial learner permit only).
- Q - Requires the driver to wear corrective lenses.
- V - Indicates that the driver has been issued a medical variance.
- X – Prohibits tank vehicles from carrying cargo (will appear on commercial learner permit only).
- Y - Requires the driver to wear a hearing aid.
- Z – Prohibits driving a commercial motor vehicle with full air brakes.