

Road Testing

Any employee who, potentially, will be responsible for the operation of a vehicle should be given a road test to determine his/her driving capabilities and what type of training may be necessary. This report discusses the procedures for conducting the road test, as well as the requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations for driver road testing by motor carriers subject to the regulations.

Introduction

When a person applies for a job that requires the operation of a vehicle, the selection criteria should include an evaluation of that person's driving capabilities. To assure that the potential driver possesses the minimum skills necessary to drive safely and to determine what training may be needed before the driver is assigned a vehicle, the applicant should be given a comprehensive road test. Assuming that a person can drive because he/she claims years of experience, or operates his/her own vehicle, can prove to be a costly error to a company.

A study by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to determine the practices of the best motor carriers, determined that road tests were an important characteristic for 90.6% of the carriers, ranking third in the overall best practices characteristics.

This report discusses the procedures for conducting a road test, as well as the requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations for driver road testing by motor carriers subject to the regulations.

Developing a Road Test

To afford comparison of applicants and assure that all necessary skills have been included, a standardized road test should be developed. All tests should be conducted using the type of equipment that the applicant will be driving, if hired. The road test must be of sufficient duration to enable the person who gives it to evaluate the skill of the driver. To assure that the test provides a fair evaluation, a few of a company's best drivers should take the test.

A form for recording the results of the road test is essential and should be made part of the personnel file of each person hired. If the information developed from a road test is to be used to enhance a driver's abilities, it must indicate areas found acceptable, as well as identifying those areas where a driver needs additional training. Employers may designate a third party to administer the road test as long as the person who administers the road test is competent to perform the evaluation.

For sample road test forms, see *Road Testing for Drivers of Automobiles, Vans, and Light Trucks*, and *Road Testing for Drivers of Trucks* on our Risk Solutions website.

Additional criteria to that contained in the forms may be necessary, depending on the type of operation and/or equipment, and can easily be added to the forms.

Conducting a Road Test

Before starting the road test, the applicant's driver's license should be examined for validity and any restrictions. The purpose of the test should be explained and any questions resolved before starting.

Directions to the driver should be clear and concise. Ample time to safely perform the required maneuvers must be available. Any conversation during the test should be related to the road test itself. The person doing the evaluation should be familiar with the location of items on the road test form.

The road test should have two components. The first part of the road test should be conducted off-the-road (e.g., terminal yard or parking lot) and should include:

- Vehicle inspection
- Operation of any specialized equipment
- Coupling and uncoupling procedures, if a combination unit
- Low speed vehicle handling, such as backing, turning, and parking

If the driver's performance on the first part of the test proves satisfactory, the second part of the test should be conducted on-the-road. A predetermined course should be established to present the widest possible variety of driving and operating conditions that the driver might encounter.

This segment of the road test will evaluate the driver's skills in normal vehicle operations (e.g., accelerating, braking, lane changing, turning, and maintaining a safe following distance), exhibit the ability of the driver to drive defensively, and provide an indication of the driver's attitude. It is safe to assume that the driver will be trying to perform in the best possible manner; however, improper driving habits are not easily hidden and should be evident to a qualified evaluator.

When conducting a road test, the evaluator must determine the driver's current level of expertise and what training would be needed in the immediate future.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations

Motor carriers subject to the FMCSR are required to have potential drivers successfully complete a road test and must issue the driver a certificate upon successful completion. The regulations state that in lieu of the actual test a motor carrier may accept:

- A valid commercial driver's license (CDL) issued to the driver by a state that road tests drivers for the specific category (class) of vehicle to be driven.¹ However, if the employer intends to assign the driver a vehicle necessitating a doubles/triples or tank vehicle endorsement, the employer must administer the road test in a representative vehicle
- A valid certificate of road test issued within the past three years for the specific category (class) of vehicle to be driven

Where a license or prior road test is accepted in lieu of a road test conducted by the motor carrier, the motor carrier must

¹If a driver holding a CDL was grandfathered from the skills test when he/she obtained the CDL, the driver may be treated the same as any other CDL holder in regards to foregoing employer skills testing.

maintain a copy of the license or certificate in the driver's qualification file. A motor carrier is not required to accept a substitute for an actual road test and doing so is not recommended. Under the regulations, a motor carrier may require any person who presents a license or certificate, as equivalent

to the road test, to take a road test, or any other test of his/her driving skill, as a condition of employment.

Road Testing for Drivers of Trucks on our Risk Solutions website addresses the requirements for the FMCSR road test and also contains the Certification of Road Test form that motor carriers must provide the driver if he/she successfully completes the road test.

References

1. Engineering and Safety Service. *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations—General Requirements*. CV-50-10. Jersey City, NJ: ISO Services, Inc., 2004.
2. —. *FMCSR—Qualifications of Drivers and LCV Instructors*. CV-50-11. Jersey City, NJ: ISO Services, Inc., 2005.
3. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. *Best Highway Safety Practices: A Survey about Safety Management Practices among the Safest Motor Carriers*. Washington, D.C.: FMCSA, March 2003. <http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/CarrierResearchResults/PDFs/BestHighwaySafetyPractices.pdf>.

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