



Establish experience, violation and accident criteria in your driver qualification standards.

Driver experience, accident and violation criteria.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) stipulate minimum qualifications for commercial motor vehicle drivers. Businesses, as a whole, have established higher standards for drivers in order to keep accidents and insurance costs under control and improve profitability. These higher standards typically relate to a driver's experience as well as accident and violation history. The following are best practice guidelines of experience, accident, and violation criteria for vehicles over 10,000 GVW.

Experience.

Inexperienced drivers are likely to have more accidents and not operate as efficiently as drivers with experience. Two years of experience pulling a reefer around Chicago is not the same as two years operating a flatbed in the Rocky Mountains. Both positions require unique knowledge and skills. Substituting one driver for the other would likely result in an increased exposure to cargo claims or accidents. Therefore, when establishing experience guidelines, it is equally important to look at the type of experience as well as length of experience.

Types of experience

- Operating similar truck(s) and trailer(s).
- Handling similar cargo: heavy machinery, perishables, bulk, liquids, etc.
- Driving conditions: heavy city, mountains, snow and ice, etc.

Length of experience

- At least three years of general driving experience, preferably five, is needed.
- Two years of full-time experience of the specific type of driving required is needed.
- Adding a specific mileage component is also important to ensure the driver was not part time or full time driving only intermittently.

- The experience should be recent. A driver that has not driven recently may have lost some of the skills and knowledge necessary to safely operate. Drivers with considerable past experience, who do not have recent experience (within the last 18 months), should be thoroughly screened and closely monitored during their first six months of driving.

Verifying experience

- Customize your application and background and reference check forms to ensure the length and specific type of experience is requested and obtained. **Example DOT application.**
- Call past employers. Sending background requests limits your ability to dig into the driver's actual type of experience (as well as other critical driver information).
- Review the driver's Pre-employment Screening Program (PSP) Driver Information Record (DIR). The DIR lists all driver roadside inspections within the last three years and all DOT recordable accidents in the last five. Do companies showing up on the DIR match those on the driver's application? If not, investigate further.
- Most full-time truck drivers operating on a regional or long-haul basis go through two to four roadside inspections a year. A lack of inspections shown on the DIR may indicate a driver has not been driving as much as reported. Investigate further.
- Verify skills and actual knowledge through actual demonstrations (road tests, securing loads, etc.) and testing/questioning (logging, HAZMAT, etc.).

When reviewing past employment, look for signs of changing jobs frequently. While turnover is high for truck drivers, changing jobs frequently is a red flag as the driver may be getting terminated for safety-related issues. Further investigation is needed. What makes you think that they will stay any longer at your organization?

Moving violations and accidents.

Drivers with moving violations and past accidents are more likely to have accidents in the future. This has been concluded in numerous insurance studies and a recent trucking industry study, *Predicting Truck*

Crash Involvement: A 2018 Update, published by the American Transportation Research Institute. Based on this correlation, organizations should establish guidelines for violations and accidents and obtain this information through motor vehicle records and driver applications. These guidelines should be in writing and included in driver handbooks. The following guidelines are based on current industry best practices for experienced drivers:

- Minor moving violations and at-fault accidents (combined):
 - No more than three in the past three years.
 - No more than two in the last 12 months.
- No major violations in the last three years.
- No drug- or alcohol-related violations, such as driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI), in the last five years.

Major violations	Minor violations/accidents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Excessive speeding — 15 mph or more over the posted speed limit ■ Failure to stop/report an accident or false vehicle report ■ Racing or exhibition driving ■ Careless/reckless/imprudent driving ■ Failure to stop for a school bus ■ Vehicular homicide, manslaughter or assault resulting from a vehicle-related incident ■ Attempting to elude a police officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any moving violation not listed under major violations ■ Nonmoving violations are not typically counted but should be reviewed individually as some may indicate a disregard for safety ■ All accidents, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Verifiable not-at-fault accidents ■ Animal collisions ■ Broken windshields

Roadside violations.

The introduction of Compliance, Safety and Accountability (CSA) and the **Pre-employment Screening Program (PSP)** in 2010 made it much easier for organizations to monitor and evaluate prospective and existing drivers' roadside inspection violation history. It has now become an industry best practice to obtain a PSP DIR on all driver applicants. When evaluating a DIR, look for:

- Signs of unsafe driving behavior, such as past accidents and violations related to speeding, following too closely, making unsafe lane changes, etc.
- Violations resulting in the driver or vehicle being placed out of service.
- Frequent violations indicating a consistent disregard for FMCSR compliance.

Some organizations have created a severity weight benchmark based on the average severity weight (points assigned) of roadside inspections for their existing drivers (based on miles driven). Once a benchmark is established, an organization can develop some guidelines around what constitutes unacceptable performance. As previously indicated, organizations should be cautious when examining a DIR that has no inspections as the driver may have driven on a limited basis during this period or not driven at all.

Legal counsel review.

Organizations should consult with legal counsel regarding any changes to their hiring or disciplinary practices to ensure they meet state and federal employment laws.

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