



Section 10: Commercial Driver's License

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Commercial Driver's License

Minn. Stat. Chapter 171

A person cannot drive a commercial motor vehicle in Minnesota unless the driver has a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL) or Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP), unless excepted. A commercial motor vehicle is defined as a vehicle or combination of vehicles used to transport passengers or property in:

- A single vehicle with a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW)* of more than 26,000 pounds;
- A combination of vehicles with a combined GVW of more than 26,000 pounds, inclusive of a towed unit(s) with a GVW of more than 10,000 pounds;
- A vehicle designed to transport 16 or more people (including the driver); or
- A vehicle of any size that transports hazardous materials that requires the vehicle to be placarded.

*For this sections, Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) is defined as the greater of:

- The unloaded weight of a vehicle (or combination) plus the weight of the load; or
- The value specified by the manufacturer as the maximum gross weight or gross vehicle weight rating.

Commercial Driver's Licenses - Class Types

Class A is valid for:

- A combination of vehicles with a combined GVW of more than 26,000 pounds inclusive of a towed unit(s) with a GVW of more than 10,000 pounds.



Sample Minnesota CDL

Class B is valid for:

- A single unit vehicle with a GVW of more than 26,000 pounds; or
- A combination vehicle with a power unit with a GVW of more than 26,000 pounds and a towed unit with a GVW of 10,000 pounds or less.

Class C is valid for:

- A vehicle (not requiring a Class A or B license) transporting hazardous materials that require the vehicle to be placarded; or
- A vehicle (not requiring a Class A or B license) designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver.

Non-Commercial Driver's Licenses

Class D is valid for operating:

- All single vehicles except vehicles with a GVW of more than 26,000 pounds; vehicles designed to transport 16 passengers or more, including the driver; or vehicles that carry hazardous materials requiring placards;
- Towing vehicles if:
 - The towed vehicle has a GVW of 10,000 pounds or less; or
 - The towed vehicle has a GVW of more than 10,000 pounds and the combination of vehicles has a GVW of 26,000 pounds or less;
- Recreational vehicles as defined in Minn. Stat. § 168.002 subd. 27;
- Authorized Emergency Vehicles whether or not in excess of 26,000 pounds GVW;
- All farm trucks if the farm truck is:
 - Controlled and operated by a farmer, including operation by an immediate family member or an employee of the farmer;
 - Used to transport agricultural products, farm machinery, or farm supplies, including hazardous materials, to or from a farm;
 - Not used in the operations of a for-hire carrier; and
 - Used within 150 miles of the farm; and
- Covered Farm Vehicles (See Section 20 for definition) not carrying hazardous materials of a type or quantity that requires the vehicle to be placarded.

Drivers Exempted from CDL Requirements. The following drivers are not required to have a CDL:

- Individuals who operate CMVs for military purposes;
- Operators of a farm vehicle (see MN Non-Commercial Drivers Licenses;

- Firefighters and other persons who operate CMVs which are Authorized Emergency Vehicles; or
- Operators of Covered Farm Vehicles (See Section 20 for definition of Covered Farm Vehicle).

Commercial Driver’s License Endorsements: A CDL driver must obtain State-issued endorsement(s) to their CDL to operate the type(s) of motor vehicles described below. CDL drivers are required to pass written and/or skills test(s) to obtain each endorsement. The following list shows the CDL endorsements with the CDL License designation:

- T – Double Trailer or Triple Trailer Combinations
- P – Passenger
- N – Tank Vehicles
- H – Hazardous Materials
- S – School Bus
- X – Hazardous Materials and Tank Vehicles

The only endorsements allowed on a Commercial Learner’s Permit (CLP) are Passenger, School Bus and Tank Vehicle.

Commercial Drivers License Restrictions: A CDL driver/applicant will have restriction(s) placed on their CDL if they fail certain portions of the written test, take skills test with restricted vehicles, or if the driver is subject to other restrictions. A driver with a restriction appearing on their CDL must comply with the restriction while operating a CMV requiring a CDL. The restriction(s) placed on the CDL include:

- L – No air brake equipped CMV
- Z – No full air braked equipped CMV
- E – No manual transmission equipped CMV
- O – No tractor-trailer CMV
- M – No Class A passenger vehicle
- N – No Class A or B passenger vehicle
- K – Intrastate only
- V – Medical Variance

Medical Record Keeping: A driver who applies for or renews a Minnesota CDL must self-certify what type of driving that he/she operates or expects to operate in. The self-certification options include:

- Interstate – non-excepted (meaning the driver is subject to the physical qualifications of FMCSR Part 391);
- Interstate – excepted (indicating the driver is not subject to the physical qualifications of FMCSR Part 391);
- Intrastate – non-excepted (meaning the driver is subject to State driver physical qualification requirements); or
- Intrastate – excepted (indicating the driver is not subject to State driver physical qualifications requirements).

A CDL driver who self-certifies as non-excepted will have their medical self-certification information and the medical certification information, as received from the licensed medical examiner, posted to their driving record by the State. Any restrictions appearing on the medical certificate will be posted to the driving record. A CDL driver who is physically qualified under a medical variance or SPE certificate will have those details added to their driving record. If a driver's medical certification and/or medical variance or SPE certification expires, a driver's CDL will be downgraded to a non-CDL class driver's license. Currently MN Driver Vehicle Services allows a 30 day grace period for an expired medical certificate, medical variance, or a SPE certificate before downgrading a CDL.

Background Checks for Drivers with CDL Hazardous Materials Endorsements:

Minnesota Driver Vehicle Services cannot issue, renew, upgrade, or transfer a hazardous materials endorsement for a CDL to any individual unless the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has determined the individual does not pose a security risk warranting denial of the endorsement. To obtain, renew, upgrade or transfer a hazardous materials endorsement for a CDL, a driver must:

1. Complete a security threat assessment application online at <https://universalenroll.dhs.gov/programs/hme> or by calling toll free (855) 347-8371;
2. Submit their fingerprints at an authorized collection site. Go to <https://universalenroll.dhs.gov/locator> to locate the nearest authorized fingerprint collection site. Note: At the fingerprint collection site, you will be required to present two forms of TSA acceptable identification. TSA will no longer accept a driver's license and medical

certificate as identification documents. A list of acceptable enrollment (identification) documents is listed on the TSA website: www.tsa.gov/for-industry/hazmat-endorsement;

3. Take and pass the Hazardous Materials Endorsement knowledge test at a Minnesota driver's license examination station; and
4. Apply or renew your CDL at a full service Minnesota driver's license examination station or driver's license renewal office.

Drivers renewing CDL Hazardous Materials Endorsements must complete all steps at least 30 days before the CDL expires in order to maintain continuous Hazardous Materials Endorsement privileges.

Restricted CDL for Certain Drivers in Farm-Related Service Industries:

Employees of designated farm-related service industries may qualify for a restricted class B or C CDL. Designated farm-related service industries include:

- Agri-chemical businesses;
- Custom harvesters;
- Farm retail outlets and suppliers; or
- Livestock feeders.

Applicants must have held a valid driver's license for at least one year. A restricted CDL will only be issued to applicants having a good driving record. A good driving record means that an applicant:

- Has not had more than one license;
- Has not had any license suspended, revoked, or canceled;
- Has not had any conviction for any type of motor vehicle for disqualifying offenses or serious traffic violations (see 49 CFR 383.51); and
- Has not had any conviction for a traffic violation arising in connection with any traffic accident, and has no record of an accident in which they were at fault.

A Restricted CDL is valid for 180 days in a 12 month period, and must be renewed each year. Restricted CDL drivers are limited to operating Class B and Class C vehicles. Restricted CDL drivers may not drive vehicles carrying placardable quantities of hazardous materials except for:

- 1,000 gallons or less of diesel fuel;
- Liquid fertilizers, including anhydrous ammonia, in vehicles with a total capacity of 3,000 gallons or less*; or
- Solid fertilizers that are not transported with any organic substance.

**Note: Anhydrous ammonia trailers equipped with more than one tank may meet the definition of a Class A vehicle combination and cannot be operated by a driver holding a Restricted CDL.*

Restricted CDL holders may not hold an unrestricted CDL at the same time. Restricted CDL holders may not operate a commercial motor vehicle beyond 150 miles from the place of business or farm currently being served.

CDL Disqualification: A driver will be disqualified from operating a CMV requiring a CDL if convicted of any of the following offenses:

- Being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while operating any motor vehicle;
- Having an alcohol concentration of .04 or greater while operating a CMV;
- Leaving the scene of an accident;
- Using a vehicle to commit a felony;
- Driving a CMV when the driver's CDL is revoked, suspended or cancelled or the driver is disqualified;
- Convictions of serious traffic violations (see Table 2 of 49 CFR 383.51);
- Operating a CMV in violation of a state or local law restricting use of hand-held mobile telephone while driving;
- Convictions of certain railroad-highway grade crossing offenses (see Table 3 of 49 CFR 383.51);
- Operating a CMV in violation of an out-of-service order; or
- Causing a fatality through negligent operation of a CMV.

Convictions of certain offense committed while operating a non-CMV can disqualify a CDL driver. Periods of disqualification vary based on the nature of the violation and whether the violation is a first or subsequent violation.

Commercial Driver's License Manual: The Minnesota Commercial Driver's License Manual, which is produced by the MN Department of Public Safety, Division of Driver and Vehicle Services, details the information required to obtain a MN CDL. The MN Commercial Driver's License Manual is available online at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/dvs/forms-documents/Documents/Commercial%20Drivers%20License%20Manual.pdf>.

Additional information on MN driver's licenses can be obtained from: Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Driver and Vehicle Services at <https://dps.mn.gov/Pages/default.aspx> or 651-297-2126.