



017: Commercial Vehicles

What is a commercial vehicle?

A Commercial Motor Vehicle is any self-propelled or towed vehicle used on highways in intrastate or interstate commerce to transport passengers or property:

- If it has a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 or more pounds; or
- If it is designed to transport more than 16 passengers, including the driver; or
- If it is used to transport hazardous materials (as defined in 49 U.S.C. App. 1801 et seq.) in quantity requiring placarding under federal regulation.

Simple definition:

In essence, it's usually a big truck that may pull a freight trailer.

However, the company and its insurance agency may consider any company vehicle a commercial vehicle.

The Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act (CMVSA)

This Act requires all states to meet the same minimum standards for testing and licensing drivers of commercial motor vehicles. The act also mandates uniform penalties and a central reporting system. Violations of the CMVSA are serious.

The laws

The laws surrounding commercial vehicles boil down to one thing: Don't drive a commercial vehicle unless you have a current Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with authorization for that vehicle. Period.

Don't move the truck

If a truck is delivering the switchgear you need but is on the wrong side of the building, don't "do the driver a favor" and drive it to the correct side.

If a truck is blocking your way and you can't find the driver, don't hop in the truck and try to move it. Call security and have them find the driver. Do not attempt to open the trailer. The truck may be legit, or it may be part of a terrorist act. Stay clear of it.

Taking delivery

You may need to be on hand to load or unload electrical equipment, especially if you are on a rush job. In that case, you may be interacting with the driver.

Commercial vehicles are hard to drive, which is one reason for the stringent licensing. Cut the driver some slack.

Offer to help the driver back up, especially if the driver is trying to maneuver a 28-foot trailer into a tight space.

Do not stand directly behind the vehicle. If assisting the driver, stand off to the side and follow directions on where the driver wants you positioned.

Stay clear of the vehicle while it is moving.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Review your company policies on operating a commercial vehicle, and on loading, unloading, or taking delivery from one.

What this Safety Talk covers:

What a commercial vehicle is and some safety aspects requiring awareness.

Discussion notes :

