

## Truckdrivers and Driver/Sales Workers

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### Significant Points

- Opportunities should be good, because this occupation has among the greatest number of job openings each year.
- Competition is expected for jobs offering the highest earnings or most favorable work schedules.
- A commercial driver's license is required to operate most larger trucks.

### Nature of the Work

Truckdrivers are a constant presence on the Nation's highways and interstates, delivering everything from automobiles to canned foods. Firms of all kinds rely on trucks for pickup and delivery of goods because no other form of transportation can deliver goods from doorstep to doorstep. Even if goods travel in part by ship, train, or airplane, trucks carry nearly all goods at some point in their journey from producer to consumer.

Before leaving the terminal or warehouse, truckdrivers check the fuel level and oil in their trucks. They also inspect the trucks to make sure the brakes, windshield wipers, and lights are working and that a fire extinguisher, flares, and other safety equipment are aboard and in working order. Drivers make sure their cargo is secure and adjust their mirrors so that both sides of the truck are visible from the driver's seat. Drivers report equipment that is inoperable, missing, or loaded improperly to the dispatcher.

Once under way, drivers must be alert to prevent accidents. Drivers can see farther down the road, because large tractor-trailers sit higher than cars, pickups, and vans. This allows drivers to seek traffic lanes that allow for a steady speed, while keeping sight of varying road conditions.

The length of deliveries varies according to the type of merchandise and its final destination. Local drivers may provide daily service for a specific route, while other drivers make intercity and interstate deliveries that take longer and may vary from job to job. The driver's responsibilities and assignments change according to the time spent on the road, the type of payloads transported, and vehicle size.

*Heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers* drive trucks or vans with a capacity of at least 26,000 Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW). They transport goods including cars, livestock, and other materials in liquid, loose, or packaged form. Many routes are from city to city and cover long distances. Some companies use two drivers on very long runs—one drives while the other sleeps in a berth behind the cab. "Sleeper" runs may last for days, or even weeks, usually with the truck stopping only for fuel, food, loading, and unloading.

Some heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers who have regular runs transport freight to the same city on a regular basis. Other drivers perform unscheduled runs because shippers request varying service to different cities every day. Dispatchers tell these drivers when to report for work and where to haul the freight. Increasingly, trucking companies use automated routing equipment to track goods during shipment.

After these truckdrivers reach their destination or complete their operating shift, the U.S. Department of Transportation requires that they complete reports detailing the trip, the condition of the truck,

and the circumstances of any accidents. In addition, Federal regulations require employers to subject drivers to random alcohol and drug tests while they are on duty.

Long-distance heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers spend most of their working time behind the wheel, but may load or unload their cargo after arriving at the final destination. This is especially common when drivers haul specialty cargo, because they may be the only one at the destination familiar with procedures or certified to handle the materials. Auto-transport drivers, for example, drive and position cars on the trailers and head ramps at the manufacturing plant and remove them at the dealerships. When picking up or delivering furniture, drivers of long-distance moving vans hire local workers to help them load or unload.

*Light or delivery services truckdrivers* drive trucks or vans with a capacity under 26,000 GVW. They deliver or pick up merchandise and packages within a specific area. This may include short "turnarounds" to deliver a shipment to a nearby city, pick up another loaded truck or van, and drive it back to their home base the same day. These services may require use of delivery tracking or location software to track the whereabouts of the merchandise or packages. Light or delivery services truckdrivers usually load or unload the merchandise at the customer's place of business. They may have helpers if there are many deliveries to make during the day, or if the load requires heavy moving. Typically, before the driver arrives for work, material handlers load the trucks and arrange items in order of delivery to minimize handling of the merchandise. Customers must sign receipts for goods and pay drivers the balance due on the merchandise if there is a cash-on-delivery arrangement. At the end of the day, drivers turn in receipts, money, records of deliveries made, and any reports on mechanical problems with their trucks.

Some local truckdrivers have sales and customer service responsibilities. The primary responsibility of *driver/sales workers*, or *route drivers*, is to deliver and sell their firm's products over established routes or within an established territory. They sell goods such as food products, including restaurant takeout items, or pick up and deliver items such as laundry. Their response to customer complaints and requests can make the difference between a large order and a lost customer. Route drivers may also take orders and collect payments.

The duties of driver/sales workers vary according to their industry, the policies of their particular company, and the emphasis placed on their sales responsibility. Most have wholesale routes that deliver to businesses and stores, rather than to homes. For example, wholesale bakery driver/sales workers deliver and arrange bread,



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cakes, rolls, and other baked goods on display racks in grocery stores. They estimate the amount and variety of baked goods to stock by paying close attention to the items that sell well and to those left sitting on the shelves. They may recommend changes in a store's order or encourage the manager to stock new bakery products. Driver/sales workers employed by laundries that rent linens, towels, work clothes, and other items visit businesses regularly to replace soiled laundry. From time to time, they solicit new orders from businesses along their route.

After completing their route, driver/sales workers order items for the next delivery based on product sales trends, weather, and customer requests.

### Working Conditions

Truckdriving has become less physically demanding because most trucks now have more comfortable seats, better ventilation, and improved, ergonomically designed cabs. Although these changes make the work environment more attractive, driving for many hours at a stretch, unloading cargo, and making many deliveries can be tiring. Local truckdrivers, unlike long-distance drivers, usually return home in the evening. Some self-employed long-distance truckdrivers who own and operate their trucks spend most of the year away from home.

Design improvements in newer trucks reduce stress and increase the efficiency of long-distance drivers. Many of the newer trucks are virtual miniapartments on wheels, equipped with refrigerators, televisions, and bunks. Satellites and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) link many of these state-of-the-art vehicles with company headquarters. Troubleshooting information, directions, weather reports, and other important communications can be delivered to the truck anywhere in the country within seconds. Drivers can easily communicate with the dispatcher to discuss delivery schedules and courses of action in the event of mechanical problems. The satellite linkup also allows the dispatcher to track the truck's location, fuel consumption, and engine performance.

Many drivers must also work with computerized inventory tracking equipment. It is important for the producer, warehouse, and customer to know the product's location at all times, in order to keep costs low and the quality of service high. For example, voice recognition software has replaced bar code readers in some freezer and refrigerator trucks, reducing error rates and improving function in cold conditions. Drivers must be able to adapt to an increasingly technology-driven workplace.

The U.S. Department of Transportation governs work hours and other working conditions of truckdrivers engaged in interstate commerce. A long-distance driver cannot work more than 60 hours in any 7-day period. Federal regulations also require that truckers rest 8 hours for every 10 hours of driving. Many drivers, particularly on long runs, work close to the maximum time permitted because they typically are compensated according to the number of miles or hours they drive. Drivers on long runs may face boredom, loneliness, and fatigue. Drivers frequently travel at night, on holidays, and weekends to avoid traffic delays and deliver cargo on time.

Local truckdrivers frequently work 50 or more hours a week. Drivers who handle food for chain grocery stores, produce markets, or bakeries typically work long hours, starting late at night or early in the morning. Although most drivers have regular routes, some have different routes each day. Many local truckdrivers, particularly driver/sales workers, load and unload their own trucks. This requires considerable lifting, carrying, and walking each day.

### Employment

Truckdrivers and driver/sales workers held about 3.3 million jobs in 2000. Most truckdrivers find employment in large metropolitan

areas along major interstate roadways where major trucking, retail, and wholesale companies have distribution outlets. Some drivers work in rural areas, providing specialized services such as delivering newspapers to customers or coal to a railroad.

Trucking companies employed about 28 percent of all truckdrivers in the United States. Almost 32 percent worked for companies engaged in wholesale or retail trade, such as auto parts stores, oil companies, lumber yards, restaurants, or distributors of food and grocery products. The remaining truckdrivers were distributed across many industries, including construction, manufacturing, and services.

Fewer than 1 out of 10 truckdrivers were self-employed. Of these, a significant number were owner-operators who either served a variety of businesses independently or leased their services and trucks to a trucking company.

### Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

State and Federal regulations govern the qualifications and standards for truckdrivers. All drivers must comply with Federal regulations and any State regulations that are stricter than Federal requirements. Truckdrivers must have a driver's license issued by the State in which they live, and most employers require a clean driving record. Drivers of trucks designed to carry at least 26,000 pounds—including most tractor-trailers, as well as bigger straight trucks—must obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) from the State in which they live. All truckdrivers who operate trucks transporting hazardous materials must obtain a CDL, regardless of truck size. Federal regulations governing the CDL exempt certain groups, including farmers, emergency medical technicians, firefighters, some military drivers, and snow and ice removers. In many States, a regular driver's license is sufficient for driving light trucks and vans.

To qualify for a commercial driver's license, applicants must pass a written test on rules and regulations, and then demonstrate that they can operate a commercial truck safely. A national databank permanently records all driving violations incurred by persons who hold commercial licenses. A State will check these records and deny a commercial driver's license to a driver who already has a license suspended or revoked in another State. Licensed drivers must accompany trainees until the trainees get their own CDL. Information on how to apply for a commercial driver's license may be obtained from State motor vehicle administrations.

While many States allow those who are at least 18 years old to drive trucks within State borders, the U.S. Department of Transportation establishes minimum qualifications for truckdrivers engaged in interstate commerce. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations require drivers to be at least 21 years old and to pass a physical examination once every 2 years. The main physical requirements include good hearing, at least 20/40 vision with glasses or corrective lenses, and a 70-degree field of vision in each eye. Drivers can not be colorblind. Drivers must be able to hear a forced whisper in one ear at not less than 5 feet, with a hearing aide if needed. Drivers must have normal use of arms and legs and normal blood pressure. Drivers can not use any controlled substances, unless prescribed by a licensed physician. Persons with epilepsy or diabetes controlled by insulin are not permitted to be interstate truckdrivers. Federal regulations also require employers to test their drivers for alcohol and drug use as a condition of employment, and require periodic random tests of the drivers while they are on duty. In addition, a driver must not have been convicted of a felony involving the use of a motor vehicle; a crime using drugs; driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or hit-and-run driving that resulted in injury or death. All drivers must be able to read and speak English well enough to read road signs, prepare reports, and communicate with law enforcement officers and the public. Also,

drivers must take a written examination on the Motor Carrier Safety Regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Many trucking operations have higher standards than those described. Many firms require that drivers be at least 22 years old, be able to lift heavy objects, and have driven trucks for 3 to 5 years. Many prefer to hire high school graduates and require annual physical examinations. Companies have an economic incentive to hire less-risky drivers because good drivers can increase fuel economy with their driving skills and decrease liability costs for the company.

Taking driver-training courses is a desirable method of preparing for truckdriving jobs and for obtaining a commercial driver's license. High school courses in driver-training and automotive mechanics also may be helpful. Many private and public vocational-technical schools offer tractor-trailer driver training programs. Students learn to maneuver large vehicles on crowded streets and in highway traffic. They also learn to inspect trucks and freight for compliance with Federal, State, and local regulations. Some programs provide only a limited amount of actual driving experience, and completion of a program does not guarantee a job. Persons interested in attending a driving school should check with local trucking companies to make sure the school's training is acceptable.

Some States require prospective drivers to complete a training course in basic truckdriving before being issued their CDL. In Maine, for example, prospective applicants must complete an 8-week course at a school certified by the Professional Truck Drivers Institute (PTDI). PTDI-certified schools provide training that meets Federal Highway Administration guidelines for training tractor-trailer drivers.

Drivers must get along well with people because they often deal directly with customers. Employers seek driver/sales workers who speak well and have self-confidence, initiative, tact, and a neat appearance. Employers also look for responsible, self-motivated individuals able to work with little supervision.

Training given to new drivers by employers is usually informal, and may consist of only a few hours of instruction from an experienced driver, sometimes on the new employee's own time. New drivers may also ride with and observe experienced drivers before assignment of their own runs. Drivers receive additional training to drive special types of trucks or handle hazardous materials. Some companies give 1 to 2 days of classroom instruction covering general duties, the operation and loading of a truck, company policies, and the preparation of delivery forms and company records. Driver/sales workers also receive training on the various types of products they carry, so that they will be effective sales workers.

Very few people enter truckdriving professions directly out of school; most truckdrivers previously held jobs in other occupations. Driving experience in the Armed Forces can be an asset. In some cases, a person may also start as a truckdriver's helper, driving part of the day and helping to load and unload freight. Senior helpers receive promotion when driving vacancies occur.

Although most new truckdrivers are assigned immediately to regular driving jobs, some start as extra drivers, substituting for regular drivers who are ill or on vacation. They receive a regular assignment when an opening occurs.

New drivers sometimes start on panel trucks or other small straight trucks. As they gain experience and show competent driving skills, they may advance to larger and heavier trucks, and finally to tractor-trailers.

Advancement of truckdrivers generally is limited to driving runs that provide increased earnings or preferred schedules and working conditions. For the most part, a local truckdriver may advance to driving heavy or special types of trucks, or transfer to long-distance truckdriving. Working for companies that also employ long-distance drivers is the best way to advance to these positions. A few

truckdrivers may advance to dispatcher, manager, or traffic work—for example, planning delivery schedules.

Some long-distance truckdrivers purchase a truck and go into business for themselves. Although many of these owner-operators are successful, some fail to cover expenses and eventually go out of business. Owner-operators should have good business sense as well as truckdriving experience. Courses in accounting, business, and business mathematics are helpful, and knowledge of truck mechanics can enable owner-operators to perform their own routine maintenance and minor repairs.

### Job Outlook

Opportunities should be favorable for persons interested in truckdriving. This occupation has among the largest number of job openings each year. Although growth in demand for truckdrivers will create thousands of openings, many openings also will occur as experienced drivers transfer to other fields of work, retire, or leave the labor force for other reasons. Jobs vary greatly in terms of earnings, weekly work hours, number of nights spent on the road, and quality of equipment operated. Competition is expected for jobs with the most attractive earnings and working conditions, because truckdriving does not require education beyond high school.

Employment of truckdrivers is expected to increase about as fast as the average for all occupations through the year 2010, as the economy grows and the amount of freight carried by truck increases. The increased use of rail, air, and ship transportation requires truckdrivers to pick up and deliver shipments. Growth in the number of long-distance drivers will remain strong because these drivers transport perishable and time-sensitive goods more efficiently than do alternative modes of transportation, such as railroads.

Average growth of light and heavy truck driver employment will outweigh slow growth in driver/sales worker jobs. The number of truckdrivers with sales responsibilities is expected to increase more slowly than the average for all other occupations because companies are increasingly shifting sales, ordering, and customer service tasks to sales and office staffs, and using regular truckdrivers to make deliveries to customers.

Job opportunities may vary from year to year, because the strength of the economy dictates the amount of freight moved by trucks. Companies tend to hire more drivers when the economy is strong and deliveries are in high demand. Consequently, when the economy slows, employers hire fewer drivers, or even lay off drivers. Independent owner-operators are particularly vulnerable to slowdowns. Industries least likely to be affected by economic fluctuation tend to be the most stable places for employment.

### Earnings

Median hourly earnings of heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers were \$15.25 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$11.97 and \$19.12 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$9.58, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$22.50 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers in 2000 were as follows:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Trucking and courier services, except air ..... | \$16.35 |
| Personnel supply services .....                 | 15.93   |
| Groceries and related products .....            | 15.39   |
| Miscellaneous special trade contractors .....   | 13.50   |
| Concrete, gypsum, and plaster products .....    | 13.22   |

Median hourly earnings of light or delivery services truckdrivers were \$10.74 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.19 and \$14.48 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.57, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$19.25 an hour. Median

hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of light or delivery services truckdrivers in 2000 were as follows:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Air transportation, scheduled .....             | \$16.61 |
| Trucking and courier services, except air ..... | 12.60   |
| Groceries and related products .....            | 11.34   |
| Motor vehicles, parts, and supplies .....       | 8.19    |
| Eating and drinking places .....                | 6.56    |

Median hourly earnings of driver/sales workers, including commission, were \$9.79 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.70 and \$14.28 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.88, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$18.77 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of driver/sales workers in 2000 were as follows:

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Beer, wine, and distilled beverages .....     | \$14.49 |
| Laundry, cleaning, and garment services ..... | 13.79   |
| Groceries and related products .....          | 12.27   |
| Nonstore retailers .....                      | 11.05   |
| Eating and drinking places .....              | 6.41    |

As a general rule, local truckdrivers receive an hourly wage and extra pay for working overtime, usually after 40 hours. Employers pay long-distance drivers primarily by the mile. Their rate per mile can vary greatly from employer to employer and may even depend on the type of cargo. Typically, earnings increase with mileage driven, seniority, and the size and type of truck driven. Most driver/sales workers receive a commission based on their sales in addition to an hourly wage.

Most self-employed truckdrivers are primarily engaged in long-distance hauling. After deducting their living expenses and the costs

associated with operating their trucks, they commonly have earnings of \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year.

Many truckdrivers are members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Some truckdrivers employed by companies outside the trucking industry are members of unions representing the plant workers of the companies for which they work.

**Related Occupations**

Other driving occupations include ambulance drivers and attendants, except emergency medical technicians; busdrivers; and taxi drivers and chauffeurs.

**Sources of Additional Information**

Information on truckdriver employment opportunities is available from local trucking companies and local offices of the State employment service.

Information on career opportunities in truckdriving may be obtained from:

- American Trucking Associations, Inc., 2200 Mill Rd., Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: <http://www.truckline.com>
- American Trucking Association Foundation, 2200 Mill Rd., Alexandria, VA 22314.

The Professional Truck Driver Institute, a nonprofit organization established by the trucking industry, manufacturers, and others, certifies truckdriver training courses meeting industry standards. A free list of certified tractor-trailer driver training courses may be obtained from:

- Professional Truck Driver Institute, 2200 Mill Rd., Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: <http://www.ptdi.org>

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## Rail Transportation Occupations

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**Significant Points**

- Overall employment in the railroad transportation industry is expected to decline due to productivity gains.
- Employment of locomotive engineers is projected to grow slowly, but all other rail transportation occupations are projected to decline.
- Nearly 8 out of 10 rail transportation workers are members of unions and many have relatively high earnings.

**Nature of the Work**

More than a century ago, freight and passenger railroads were the ties binding the Nation together and the engine driving the economy. Today, rail transportation remains a vital link in our Nation's transportation network and economy. Railroads deliver billions of tons of freight and thousands of travelers to destinations throughout the Nation, while subways and streetcars transport millions of passengers within metropolitan areas.

*Locomotive engineers* are among the most experienced and skilled workers on the railroad. Locomotive engineers operate large trains carrying cargo and passengers between stations. Most engineers

run diesel locomotives, while a few operate electrically powered locomotives.

Before and after each run, engineers check the mechanical condition of their locomotive, and make minor adjustments on the spot. Engineers receive starting instructions from conductors and move controls such as throttles and air brakes to drive the locomotive. They monitor gauges and meters that measure speed, amperage, battery charge, and air pressure both in the brakelines and in the main reservoir.

On the open rail and in the yard, engineers confer with conductors and traffic control center personnel via two-way radio or mobile telephone to issue or receive information concerning stops, delays, and train locations. They interpret and comply with train orders, train signals, speed limits, and railroad rules and regulations. They must have a thorough knowledge of the signaling systems, yards, and terminals on routes over which they operate. Engineers must be constantly aware of the condition and makeup of their train. This is extremely important because trains react differently to acceleration, braking, and curves, depending on the grade and condition of the rail, number of cars, ratio of empty to loaded cars, and amount of slack in the train.

*Locomotive firers*, or *assistant engineers*, monitor instruments during runs and watch for dragging equipment, track obstructions, and train signals. In rail yards, they watch for and relay traffic signals from yard workers to yard engineers. *Rail yard engineers*, *dinkey operators*, and *hostlers* drive switching or small "dinkey" engines within railroad yards, industrial plants, mines and quarries, or construction projects.