

National Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Program Glossary and Acronym Guide



This document provides an overview of key terms, definitions, and acronyms used within the National Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Program convictions and disqualifications process. The information is updated as of June 2020. [Click here](#) to view a list of relevant acronyms.

Glossary

A

Administrative Per Se (Admin Per Se): Refers to convictions and disqualifications determined solely through administrative action (rather than a criminal conviction) based entirely on the results of a breath, blood, or urine test above a determined legal threshold.

Administrative Procedure Act (APA) of 1946: Governs the process by which Federal agencies develop and issue regulations. The APA includes requirements for publishing notices of proposed and final rulemaking in the Federal Register, and provides opportunities for the public to comment on notices of proposed rulemaking.

American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA): Founded in 1933, AAMVA is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization that develops and maintains programs for motor vehicle administration, law enforcement, and highway safety. AAMVA partners with FMCSA to support the shared mission of improving highway safety. AAMVA represents the State, provincial, and territorial officials in the United States and Canada who administer and enforce motor vehicle laws. Its membership includes associations, organizations, and businesses that support motor vehicle administration.

AAMVA Code Dictionary (ACD): A set of codes used nationwide to standardize communication among States. The uniform codes serve to identify the types of driver convictions and reasons for driver disqualifications used in CDLIS.

Annual Program Review (APR): Conducted annually by FMCSA in each State to confirm compliance with Federal CDL regulations. States determined to be noncompliant are required to submit an Action Plan to achieve compliance.

C

Cancellation: The termination of driving privileges due to administrative or testing errors, or fraud committed by someone other than the driver.

CDLIS Central Site (CS): An online database that maintains the CDLIS Master Pointer Records, processes a number of transactions between jurisdictions, and reports CDLIS activity to FMCSA.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): Codification of the general and permanent rules and regulations (sometimes called administrative law) published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal government of the United States. All regulations applicable to transportation-related issues and questions are contained in 49 CFR.

Commercial Driver's License (CDL):

A type of driver's license required to operate most large or heavy vehicles. Obtaining a CDL requires a higher level of knowledge, experience, skills, and physical abilities than what is required for a non-commercial license. Thus, CDL holders are held to a higher standard when operating any type of vehicle on public roads.

Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Holder:

An individual whose last jurisdiction-issued license was a CDL. This applies even if the driver is disqualified from the use of his or her commercial driving privileges. It also applies if the CDL has expired and no other license has been issued.

Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS): Developed pursuant to section 12007 of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986, CDLIS enables each State to ensure that

each CMV driver has only one driver's license and one complete Driver History Record. States use CDLIS to complete various procedures, including:

- Transmitting out-of-State convictions and disqualifications;
- Transferring the driver record when a CDL holder moves to another State; and
- Responding to requests for driver status and history.

CDLIS is currently operated by AAMVA.

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Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

Judiciary Outreach Program: A program primarily funded by FMCSA grants that involves multiple partner organizations and provides specialized training and information for judges, prosecutors, court clerks, and court administrators on the importance of commercial motor vehicle enforcement and the adjudication of cases involving CDL holders.

Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

Program: Established in 1986, a United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) program that seeks to reduce the number and severity of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crashes in the United States by ensuring that only qualified drivers are eligible to receive and retain a CDL. For every one CDL driver, there should be one record and one licensing document. In this training, the CDL Program is referred to as the National CDL Program.

Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) Grant:

An FMCSA discretionary grant that provides financial assistance to States to achieve compliance with the requirements of 49 CFR Parts 383 and 384 and otherwise improve the National CDL Program. Additionally, the CDLPI Grant program provides financial assistance for any entity capable of executing National projects that aid States in compliance efforts and will improve the National CDL Program.

Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP): A permit issued to an individual by a State or other jurisdiction of domicile. When carried with a valid driver's license issued by the same State or jurisdiction, a CLP authorizes the individual to operate a CMV when accompanied by a holder of a valid CDL for purposes of behind-the-wheel training. When issued to an existing CDL holder, a CLP serves as authorization for accompanied behind-the-wheel training in a configuration of CMV for which the holder's current CDL is not valid.

Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP)

Holder: An individual who held a valid (unexpired) CLP at the time of the citation.

Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV):

As defined in 49 CFR Part 383.5 (applies only to regulations in 49 CFR Part 383):

A motor vehicle or combination of motor vehicles used in commerce to transport passengers or property if the motor vehicle is a:

- Combination Vehicle (Group A)—having a gross combination weight rating or gross combination weight of 11,794 kilograms or more (26,001 pounds or more), whichever is greater, inclusive of a towed unit(s) with a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of more than 4,536 kilograms (10,000 pounds), whichever is greater; or
- Heavy Straight Vehicle (Group B)—having a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of 11,794 or more kilograms (26,001 pounds or more), whichever is greater; or
- Small Vehicle (Group C) that does not meet Group A or B requirements but that either—
 - a. Is designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver; or
 - b. Is of any size and is used in the transportation of hazardous materials as defined in this section.

As defined in 49 CFR Part 390.5:

Any self-propelled or towed motor vehicle used on a highway in interstate commerce to transport passengers or property when the vehicle:

- Has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross combination weight rating, or gross vehicle weight or gross combination weight, of 4,536 kg (10,001 pounds) or more, whichever is greater; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than eight (8) passengers (including the driver) for compensation; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver, and is not used to transport passengers for compensation; or

- Is used in transporting material found by the Secretary of Transportation to be hazardous under 49 U.S.C. 5103 and transported in a quantity requiring placarding under regulations prescribed by the Secretary under 49 CFR, subtitle B, chapter I, subchapter C.

Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act (CMVSA) of 1986:

Established the National CDL Program and implemented minimum CDL standards. Prohibits any person who operates a CMV from having more than one driver's license, establishing the backbone of the CDL Program: One Driver, One License, One Record.

Conviction:

As defined in 49 CFR Part 383.5:

- An unvacated adjudication of guilt;
- A determination that a person has violated or failed to comply with the law in a court of original jurisdiction or by an authorized administrative tribunal;
- An unvacated forfeiture of bail or collateral deposited to secure the person's appearance in court;
- A plea of guilty or nolo contendere ("no contest") accepted by the court;
- The payment of a fine or court cost; or
- A violation of a condition of release without bail, regardless of whether or not the penalty is rebated, suspended, or probated.

D

Deferral: A form of masking in which a court allows a driver (before an adjudication of guilt) to perform or abstain from certain actions that result in the charge being dismissed. Deferral might also be known as Probation Before Judgment (PBJ), Adjudgment Pending Dismissal, or classifying a charge as Held in Abeyance.

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Disqualification:

As defined in 49 CFR Part 383:

- The suspension, revocation, or cancellation of a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) or Commercial Driver's License (CDL) by the State or jurisdiction of issuance;
- Any withdrawal of a person's privileges to drive a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) by a State or other jurisdiction as the result of a violation of State or local law relating to motor vehicle traffic control; or
- A determination by the FMCSA that a person is not qualified to operate a CMV under 49 CFR Part 391.

Disqualification Effective Date: The date a license is disqualified. There may be a delay between when the State of Record (SOR) is notified of a conviction and when it imposes a disqualification, so that it may give mandated notification to the driver and the driver has had an opportunity to request an administrative hearing.

Disqualification Eligibility Date:

The earliest date the driver may satisfy any conditions to end the disqualification, such as paying any fees.

Disqualification Reinstatement Date:

The actual date the driver's driving privileges are reinstated; this date is typically blank when the disqualification is first posted and must never be a future date.

Diversion: A form of masking in which a State allows a driver (after an adjudication of guilt) to perform actions that result in the conviction being reduced or erased and thus not appearing correctly (or at all) on the Driver History Record (DHR).

Division Administrator (DA): A position in each State that leads the FMCSA Division Office, supported by a multi-disciplinary team. The DA is responsible for the development and administration of a multifaceted transportation safety program, and represents FMCSA in dealings with Federal and State government and local business officials on transportation safety and commercial program issues.

Driver History Record (DHR):

The electronic record of an individual CDL driver's status and history stored by the State of Record (SOR) as part of the Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS). A DHR includes driver identification information, license information (including information about any permits, endorsements, and restrictions), and a history of accidents, convictions, and disqualifications.

Driving Under the Influence (DUI):

The FMCSA has established 0.04% as the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level at or above which a CDL driver who is required to have a CDL, and is operating a commercial motor vehicle, is deemed to be driving under the influence of alcohol and subject to the disqualification sanctions under the Federal regulations. Most States have established a BAC level of 0.08% as the level at or above which a person operating a non-commercial motor vehicle is deemed to be driving under the influence of alcohol. Sanctions for alcohol-related driving violations may affect the driver's qualification and eligibility for both commercial and non-commercial licenses.

E

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

(eCFR): An online version of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that is updated daily to better reflect its current status. The eCFR is an editorial compilation of CFR material and amendments published in the daily Federal Register.

F

Failure to Appear, Failure to Pay, Failure to Comply (FTA/FTP/FTC):

In most States, when a driver receives a citation from an officer, the driver technically offers up his or her driving privileges as collateral to appear in court and comply

with subsequent requirements rather than being taken into custody and forced to post bond as is customary in a criminal process. Under the Failure to Appear/Pay/Comply (FTA/FTP/FTC) Program, an SDLA may deny the renewal of a CDL if the driver has failed to appear for a citation or pay a fine. Depending on the State, a CDL may be disqualified or denied renewal until the reported citations or violations are cleared and reported by the court(s) to the SDLA.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety

Administration (FMCSA): An Operating Administration of the USDOT charged with regulation of the motor carrier industry. The primary mission of FMCSA is to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations

(FMCSR): Minimum standards for those involved with the operation of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in interstate commerce, intended to cover all people and entities involved in the interstate operation of these trucks.

Federal Register (FR): A daily journal of the Federal Government that includes Federal Agency regulations, proposed rules and notices of interest to the public, Executive Orders, proclamations, and other presidential documents.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation

(FAST) Act: Passed by Congress and signed into law in 2015, the FAST ACT (Pub. L. No. 114-94) provides long-term funding for surface transportation, allowing State and local governments to move forward with critical transportation projects (new highways, transit lines, etc.) with confidence they will receive Federal support. Additionally, it reforms many Federal transportation programs, including streamlining the approval processes for new transportation projects, providing new safety tools, and establishing new programs to advance critical freight projects.

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Foreign Convictions and Withdrawal Database (FCWD): Repository of the U.S. conviction history on Mexican and Canadian commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers. Allows FMCSA to disqualify drivers from operating in the United States if they are convicted of disqualifying offenses listed in the FMCSRs.

H

Hazardous Materials (Hazmat/HM): Includes materials designated by the Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT) as posing an unreasonable threat to the public and the environment. The term “Hazardous Materials” includes: (1) Hazardous Substances; (2) Hazardous Wastes; (3) Marine Pollutants; (4) Elevated Temperature Material; (5) Materials identified in 49 CFR Part 172.101; and (6) Materials meeting the definition of Hazardous Materials contained in 49 CFR Part 173.

Hours of Service (HOS): Regulations issued by FMCSA and governing the working hours of anyone operating a commercial motor vehicle (CMV). These regulations apply to truck drivers, commercial and city bus drivers, and school bus drivers who operate CMVs. These rules limit the number of daily and weekly hours drivers may spend driving and working, and regulate the minimum amount of time drivers must spend resting between driving shifts. For intrastate commerce, the respective State’s regulations apply.

M

Masking: Any action whereby a State defers, diverts, or in any other way prevents the conviction of a CLP or CDL holder from appearing in a CDLIS driver record.

Master Pointer Record (MPR): In CDLIS, the CDLIS Central Site (CS) keeps a Master Pointer Record for each

driver. The record contains driver identification information and a pointer to the current State of Record (SOR).

Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act (MCSIA) of 1999: Established the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) within the Department of Transportation (DOT). Also disqualified Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) drivers from operating with a revoked, suspended, or canceled CDL.

Motor Vehicle Record (MVR): A report of an individual’s driving history, as documented by a State’s Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or similar government entity that issues driver licenses. While this may vary from one State to the next depending on local reporting practices, information reported in MVRs includes driver’s license status and class, violations, convictions, restrictions, and other information related to driving records and credentials.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21): Passed by Congress and signed into law in 2012, MAP-21 provides funding for transportation programs and implemented a streamlined, performance-based surface transportation program, building on previously established highway, transit, bike, and pedestrian programs and policies.

N

National Driver Registry (NDR): National repository of information on problem drivers. Maintains the Problem Driver Pointer System (PDPS).

Nonresident Violator Compact (NRVC): A voluntary agreement between certain States that standardizes methods to process nonresident violators receiving citations or otherwise failing to comply with outstanding moving traffic summons. If an out-of-State driver violates specific

driving laws of an NRVC member State, the State may send a non-compliance notice to the driver’s State of Record (SOR).

Notice of Claim (NOC): The initial document issued by FMCSA to assert a civil penalty for alleged violations of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMRs), or Federal Motor Carrier Commercial Regulations (FMCCRs).

Notice of Violation (NOV): A document alleging a violation of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMRs), or Federal Motor Carrier Commercial Regulations (FMCCRs), for which corrective action, other than payment of a civil penalty, is recommended.

O

Office of the Federal Register and Government Publishing Office (GPO): Formerly known as the Government Printing Office, the GPO is the Federal Government’s primary centralized resource for gathering, cataloging, producing, providing, authenticating, and preserving published information in all its forms. The GPO is also responsible for the production and distribution of information products and services for all three branches of the Federal Government.

One Driver, One License, One Record: The backbone of the Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) Program, established by the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act (CMVSA) of 1986. Prohibits any person who operates a CMV from having more than one driver’s license, ensuring that for every one CDL driver there is one license and one driving record.

Out-of-Service Order (OOSO): A declaration issued by FMCSA or law enforcement that prohibits a motor carrier or driver from operating a commercial motor vehicle.

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P

Probation Before Judgement (PBJ):

See Deferral.

Problem Driver Pointer System (PDPS):

An electronic information system, similar to CDLIS, that allows States and other relevant organizations to search National Driver Register (NDR) data. Based on information received as a result of an NDR search, PDPS directs the inquiry to the State of Record (SOR) that stores a driver's status and history. Based on the information received from the SOR, the issuing jurisdiction decides if the applicant is eligible to receive a new or renewed driver license.

R

Record Retention Period: The length of time a State Driver Licensing Agency (SDLA) is required to maintain conviction and disqualification records.

Report Out-of-State Conviction

(ROOSC): The communication between a State of Conviction (SOC) and State of Record (SOR) that conveys conviction information necessary for the SOR to populate the Driver History Record (DHR). This may occur as an electronic message via CDLIS or a compliant paper form.

Revocation: Term used for the withdrawal or disqualification of driving privileges. Revocation may indicate that the driver was not eligible for the license. Some States require the driver to be retested before the restoration of his or her commercial driving privileges.

Roadside Inspection: The pre-defined evaluation of a driver or vehicle components to ensure compliance with applicable FMCSRs. Roadside Inspections are conducted by a certified inspector at a variety of locations, such as weigh stations, border checkpoints, bus terminals, or when a law enforcement official stops a CMV.

Rulemaking Process: Steps through which Federal executive and independent agencies create, establish, and promote regulations. The rulemaking process is dictated by the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) of 1946.

S

Social Security Database (SSD):

A repository of Social Security Numbers maintained by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

Social Security Online Verification

(SSOLV): A process that allows jurisdictions to verify Social Security Numbers in real time against the Social Security Database (SSD). SSOLV allows State Driver Licensing Agencies (SDLAs) to verify drivers' names and Social Security Numbers.

State Driver Licensing Agency (SDLA):

The organization within a State responsible for issuing driver licenses. Sometimes referred to as Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) or Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).

State of Conviction (SOC): Any State that convicts a driver of a reportable offense. It maintains the original conviction records and any negotiations in its own database or on paper records. It is also the authority for conviction on the Driver History Record (DHR).

State of Record (SOR): Issues the CDL to the driver and maintains the Master Point Record (MPR) on the CDLIS Central Site (CS) and the Driver History Record (DHR) on its own database.

State of Withdrawal (SOW): Any State that withdraws a driver's privileges to operate a motor vehicle. If the SOW is also the State of Record (SOR), the withdrawal is effective Nation-wide.

State Procedures Manual (SPM):

Outlines the standard administrative practices required by each jurisdiction.

State Programs Specialist (SPS):

Reporting to the Division Administrator (DA) within each FMCSA Division, the State Programs Specialist (SPS) is responsible for the oversight, promotion, and review of the State's technical projects and programs, including the Commercial Driver's License Program and Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program.

Suspension: The temporary withdrawal or disqualification of a driver.

T

Transportation Security Administration

(TSA): A U.S. Agency within the Department of Homeland Security that is mandated to develop and implement policies to ensure the safety of the Nation's transportation systems.

U

USA PATRIOT Act of 2001: Passed by Congress and signed into law in 2001, the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act allows the FMCSA to assist the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in implementing Section 1012 of the USA PATRIOT Act regarding the issuance of licenses to operate CMVs transporting hazardous materials.

U.S. Department of Transportation

(USDOT): A Federal Cabinet Department whose mission is to ensure the United States has the safest, most efficient, and modern transportation system in the world, which improves the quality of life for all American people and communities, from rural to urban, and increases the productivity and competitiveness of American workers and businesses.

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Acronyms

AAMVA: American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators

ACD: AAMVA Code Dictionary

APA: Administrative Procedure Act

APR: Annual Program Review

CDL: Commercial Driver's License

CDLIS: Commercial Driver's License Information System

CDLPI Grant: Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation Grant

CFR: Code of Federal Regulations

CLP: Commercial Learner's Permit

CMV: Commercial Motor Vehicle

CMVSA: Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act

CR: Compliance Review

CS: CDLIS Central Site

DA: Division Administrator

DHR: Driver History Record

DUI: Driving Under the Influence

eCFR: Electronic Code of Federal Regulations

FAST Act: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

FCWD: Foreign Convictions and Withdrawal Database

FMCSA: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

FMCSR: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations

FR: Federal Register

FTA/FTP/FTC: Failure to Appear, Failure to Pay, Failure to Comply

GPO: Office of the Federal Register and Government Publishing Office

Hazmat/HM: Hazardous Materials

HOS: Hours of Service

MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act

MCSIA: Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act

MPR: Master Pointer Record

MVR: Motor Vehicle Record

NDR: National Driver Registry

NOC: Notice of Claim

NOV: Notice of Violation

NRVC: Nonresident Violator Compact

OOSO: Out-of-Service Order

PBJ: Probation Before Judgement

PDPS: Problem Driver Pointer System

ROOSC: Report Out-of State Conviction

SDLA: State Driver Licensing Agency

SOC: State of Conviction

SOR: State of Record

SOW: State of Withdrawal

SPM: State Procedures Manual

SPS: State Programs Specialist

SSD: Social Security Database

SSOLV: Social Security Online Verification

TSA: Transportation Security Administration

USDOT: U.S. Department of Transportation