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July 1995

# COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE IN A NUTSHELL



**THE PRIDE'S BACK INSIDE!**  
**FROM NOW ON, ONLY THE BEST WILL DRIVE.**



**Iowa Department  
of Transportation**

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CDL study manuals are available upon request from Iowa DOT driver license stations and from other sources. PLEASE ask for your personal copy **only** when you are ready to study for the test. This will help keep license fees down and ensure you have the most current study information. Please pass the study guide on to a friend when you have completed the testing.

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# Attention Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers:

Federal law requires uniform licensing of truck and bus drivers (CDL) in all states and the District of Columbia. Provisions have been made for converting a chauffeur's or class "D" license to a CDL, with appropriate testing and fees, whenever the applicant wants to make the conversion.

Commercial Driver's License (CDL) testing and issuance began in Iowa November 1, 1990. A person applying for a

license to operate a commercial motor vehicle must apply for a CDL.

- Knowledge test(s) required for all applicants.
- Skills test in appropriate vehicle required for all applicants.

## CDL Vehicle/License Classification System

### Type "A" Vehicle/Class "A" CDL

Any combination of vehicles with a GCWR of 26,001 or more pounds, provided the GVWR of the vehicle (s) being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.

Examples include, but are not limited to:



The holders of a Class A license may, with appropriate endorsements, operate vehicles within Types B and C.

### Type "B" Vehicle/Class "B" CDL

Any single vehicle with a GVWR of 26,001 or more pounds, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR.

Examples include, but are not limited to:



The holders of a Class B license may, with appropriate endorsements, operate vehicles within Type C.

### Type "C" Vehicle/Class "C" CDL

Any single vehicle less than 26,001 pounds GVWR, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR. This group applies only to vehicles which are placarded for hazardous material or designed to transport 16 or more persons, including the driver (and similar-size passenger vehicles designed to transport a fewer number of handicapped persons).

Examples include, but are not limited to:



**CDL fees: \$16 - 2 years / \$32 - 4 years (initial and renewal)  
plus applicable endorsement or restriction fees**

*The holder of a Class "A", "B" or "C" CDL may also operate passenger cars and other non-CMV's of similar size to the CMV type, except a motorcycle, without additional licensing.*



## Determination of Type of License Required

To determine the type of license needed, the person needs to know some terms. Determination of the type of license needed has NOT been based on registered weight since CDL started in 1990. Terms you should be familiar with:

- GVWR - Gross Vehicle Weight Rating. This is the manufacturer's rating of the maximum load plus the weight of the vehicle. The GVWR label is located in the cab, or trailer hitch or front of the trailer.
- GCWR - Gross Combination Weight Rating. This is the combined gross vehicle weight ratings of two or more units.
- Commercial Vehicle - Any vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of over 10,000 pounds. It is important in determining application of interstate trucking regulations, but NOT for a commercial driver license.
- Commercial Motor Vehicle - A motor vehicle or combination of vehicles used to transport passengers or property if any of the following apply:
  1. The combination of vehicles has a gross combination weight rating of twenty-six thousand one or more pounds provided the towed vehicle has a gross vehicle weight rating of ten thousand one or more pounds.
  2. The motor vehicle has a gross vehicle weight rating of twenty-six thousand one or more pounds.
  3. The motor vehicle is designed to transport sixteen or more persons, including the operator, or is of a size and design to transport sixteen or more persons, including the operator, but is redesigned or modified to transport less than sixteen handicapped persons.
  4. The motor vehicle is used in the transportation of hazardous material of a type or quantity requiring vehicle placarding.

## What's Required to Obtain a CDL

- Proof of full name, date of birth and social security number (SSN is required on CDL in Iowa)
- CDLIS (interstate computer check for driving record; must be clear in all states) and Iowa record check
- Vision screening
- Knowledge tests (No. of questions/allowed to miss)
 

General Knowledge for any CDL .....	50/10
Combination Vehicle for Class A .....	20/04
Air Brake .....	25/05
Passenger .....	20/04
Doubles/Triples .....	20/04
HazMat .....	30/06
Tank .....	20/04
Iowa Operator (if not already holding IA DL)	35/07
- Skills Test (CDL)
  - You supply a representative vehicle in good working order.
  - Three-Phase Test:
    - Pre-trip Safety Check
    - Skills (maneuvers around cones)
    - Driving Test (on public roads with examiner)
  - No CDL written or driving tests done by an agency other than the Iowa Department of Transportation are accepted.

## CDL Related Endorsements and Restrictions

### ENDORSEMENTS

- Passenger - P - Required for any vehicle rated for 16 or more people including the driver, or originally designed for 16 or more people, but altered to provide space for handicapped passengers. (Written and driving test) School bus drivers must also have a bus permit from the Department of Education.
- Hazardous Materials - H - Required for operating any vehicle carrying a quantity of hazardous materials requiring placarding. (Written test for initial issuance or HM out-of-state transfer and renewal and upgrade.)
- Doubles/Triples - T - Required when pulling multiple trailers. Triples are not permitted in Iowa. (Written test)
- Tank - N - Required for vehicles having either permanent or temporary tank of 1,001 gallons or more attached. (Written test).
- Tank and HM - X - Combination of the Tank and HM endorsements. (Tests for Tank and HM endorsements)

### RESTRICTIONS

- L - Not valid for vehicle equipped with air brakes. (Written and drive tests required to obtain air brake validation.)
- 8 - Class A license, but only valid for driving Class B passenger vehicles.
- 9 - Class A or B license, but only valid for driving Class C passenger vehicles.
- 3 - The Commercial Driver's Instruction Permit allows a person to drive any commercial motor vehicle as long as the person occupying the seat beside the driver has the correct class, endorsements and restrictions for the vehicle being driven. The permit is valid for six months and it may only be renewed once in a two-year period. The CDL general knowledge test is required if you currently hold a non-CDL license. A 3 restriction can be shown on any class license.

A person may obtain the CDL class license he/she desires and still carry a "3" restriction on his/her license because the six-month term of the instruction permit has not expired. The license validity would be determined by checking the current class, endorsements and restrictions other than the 3 restriction. After the permit expires, as indicated on the restriction supplement, a duplicate license may be issued dropping the 3 restriction.

## License Fees

### BASE CDL

2-yr. ....	\$16.00
4-yr. ....	\$32.00

### ENDORSEMENTS

Air Brakes (drop L restriction) .....	\$10.00
Passenger - P .....	\$10.00
HM - H .....	\$5.00
Doubles/Triples - T .....	\$5.00
Tank - N .....	\$5.00
Tank & HM - X (paid for separately)	

Except for HM, endorsement and restriction fees are not charged again unless the CDL becomes invalid.



## Restricted CDL

A Restricted CDL will be issued to "suppliers or employees of suppliers of agricultural inputs" which are defined as "suppliers or applicators of agricultural chemicals, fertilizer, seed or animal feeds." The license will be issued for Class B or Class C at the option of the licensee, but not as a Class A. The Restricted CDL will be valid for commercial motor vehicles requiring tanker, air brake and hazardous materials endorsements/restrictions, but no CDL written or driving tests will be required, nor will endorsement fees be charged and no CDL endorsements/restrictions will show on the license. The Restricted CDL holders may operate between the place of business and the farm currently being serviced, but not to exceed 150 miles from the place of business. The Restricted CDL will be valid for up to 180 days per calendar year, but specific validation periods will be shown on the license restriction supplement. The periods of validity, March 15 to June 30 and October 4 to December 14, are set by law. The Restricted CDL must be validated before each period. The applicant may revalidate up to 30 days before the beginning of each period.

The only hazardous materials allowed to be carried are:

- Liquid fertilizers, such as anhydrous ammonia, in quantities of 3,000 gallons or less; and
- Solid fertilizers, such as ammonium nitrate, provided they are not mixed with any organic substance.

To obtain the Restricted CDL, a person must have two years of unaccompanied driving experience, not including Moped, School License or Minor Restricted License. The applicant must have a good driving record during the most recent two years. A good driving record is defined as:

- No multiple licenses;
- No license withdrawals (suspension, revocation, etc.) of ANY kind;
- No convictions for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- No convictions for committing any felony involving a motor vehicle;
- No convictions for speeding 15 mph or more over the posted limit;
- No convictions for reckless driving;
- No convictions for improper or erratic lane changes;
- No convictions for following too closely;
- No convictions for accident-related traffic law violations; and
- No record of at-fault accidents.

The Restricted CDL will cost either \$16 for two years or \$32 for four years, at the applicant's option. Each time the person comes in to update the validation period there will be a \$1.00 charge and a complete search of the applicant's driving record.

When the driver is not operating a commercial motor vehicle, he/she can only drive the types of vehicles he/she was valid for before the Restricted CDL was issued. That license type will be indicated on the restriction supplement.

## Who is Exempt From CDL in Iowa

**Fire Fighters** - A volunteer or paid fire fighter while operating a fire vehicle to preserve life or property or while executing related governmental functions.

**Military** - Active duty military personnel while operating equipment owned or operated by the Department of Defense.

**Recreational Vehicle** - A person operating a recreational vehicle for personal or family use or a person operating a vehicle with less than 26,001 GVWR towing a travel trailer or fifth wheel trailer for personal or family use.

**Farmers** - A farmer or a person working for a farmer while operating a commercial vehicle owned by the farmer within 150 air miles of the farmer's farm to transport the farmer's own agricultural products, farm machinery or farm supplies to or from the farm. This also applies to farmers who are exchanging services.

## Tickets/Violations

Federal regulations require that Iowa licensed commercial drivers must report ALL violations (except parking violations) to their employers within 30 days of conviction, whether the driver was operating a commercial or non-commercial vehicle. The drivers must also notify the Office of Driver Services, Iowa Department of Transportation, Park Fair Mall, P.O. Box 9204, Des Moines, IA 50306-9204 of any out-of-state violations received, (except parking violations), in commercial or non-commercial vehicles. Unemployed drivers would notify the Office of Driver Services of all violations (except parking violations). Information required in this notification includes: date, location (town and state), driver's name, license number, driver signature, nature of violation, and type of vehicle operated. Individual drivers should determine if the requirements found in sections 383.31 and 391.27 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations apply to them.

## Disqualifications

There are certain offenses that will cause the commercial driver to lose the commercial part of the driving privilege but still retain the non-commercial privilege. All these offenses must happen in a commercial motor vehicle to count toward disqualification.

The following offenses would lead to disqualification of the CDL privileges for one year, or three years if they happen in a vehicle carrying hazardous materials requiring placarding:

- Operating a commercial motor vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Operating a commercial motor vehicle with a 0.04% blood alcohol concentration (BAC);
- Refusal to submit to a chemical test;
- Failure to stop and render aid at the scene of an accident involving the person's vehicle; or
- A felony or aggravated misdemeanor involving the use of a commercial motor vehicle other than an offense involving the manufacturing or distribution of a controlled substance.

A person is disqualified for life for two separate convictions of the above offenses.

A person is disqualified for life for conviction of using a commercial motor vehicle in the commission of a felony or aggravated misdemeanor involving the manufacturing, distribution or dispensing of a controlled substance.



A person convicted of any two of the following offenses while operating a CMV within a three-year period will be disqualified for 60 days, or 120 days for three offenses within a three-year period:

- Speeding 15 mph or more over the posted limit;
- Reckless driving;
- Violation of any traffic law in conjunction with a fatal accident;
- Operating a commercial motor vehicle when not issued a motor vehicle license valid for the vehicle being operated;
- Operating a commercial motor vehicle while disqualified;
- Operating a commercial motor vehicle without a valid license in possession;
- Following another motor vehicle too closely; or
- Improper lane changes.

A person convicted of violating an out-of-service order will be disqualified for:

- 90 days for the first conviction;
- 1 year for the first conviction while transporting HM requiring placarding or while operating a commercial motor vehicle transporting more than 15 passengers, including the driver;
- 1 year for the second conviction for separate incidents in 10 years;
- 3-5 years for the second or subsequent conviction while operating a vehicle requiring HM or passenger endorsement;
- 3-5 years for third or subsequent conviction for separate incidents in 10 years.

A person's commercial privilege is disqualified when the driver's non-commercial privilege is withdrawn (suspended, revoked, etc.).

When only the commercial privilege is disqualified, the person may obtain a non-commercial license for the period of the disqualification.

Iowa law does not allow ignition interlock devices on commercial motor vehicles.

Once a person chooses to carry a non-commercial license, all written and driving tests will be required to regain the commercial privileges.

## **OWI - Operating While Intoxicated or Drugged**

In addition to the OWI laws that apply to all drivers in Iowa, there are special laws that apply to people holding CDLs while driving commercial motor vehicles. These are explained in the "Disqualifications" section of this booklet.

Also Iowa has adopted federal regulations which prohibit:

- Consuming alcohol within four hours of going on duty;
- or
- Consuming alcohol while on duty or being under the influence or having any measured alcohol concentration or any detected presence of alcohol while on duty.

If a driver is found in violation, he/she will immediately be placed out of service for 24 hours.

Iowa law includes an Implied Consent Law. Under this law, any peace officer can ask you to submit to a breath test, urine test or blood test if the officer feels you may be driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If you take the test and fail or refuse to take the test, your license can be taken away on the spot! In either of these cases, the officer will issue you an immediate notice of revocation/disqualification and a 20-day temporary license.

If the tests indicate a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .10 or more, you will be issued an immediate notice of revocation and a 20-day temporary license. There is a 48-hour jail sentence that is mandatory for your first OWI conviction. For a second conviction there is a 7-day mandatory jail sentence.

If you have a BAC of .10 or more you will lose your license for either six months or one year, depending on your prior record.

If you refuse to take a chemical test you may lose your license for even longer. If it is your first revocation, you will lose your license for eight months. If you have had other revocations for related offenses, the revocation is for 1½ years. If you are convicted of OWI and have not had your license revoked under the implied consent law, you will lose your license for 180 days or one year, depending on your prior record.

A conviction by the court may result in jail, a fine, OWI school, an alcoholism or drug treatment program, or other penalty. This is in addition to the revocation of your driving privileges.

If the court says you must go to the 12-hour drinking driver school, you must pay for the course. The fee is paid to the area college giving the class. The school will not reduce the time your license is revoked.

## **Victim Reparation**

If your license is revoked for refusing to submit to a chemical test for OWI, having an alcohol concentration of .10 or greater, or a conviction of operating while intoxicated or drugged, you will have to pay a \$200 civil penalty in addition to other reinstatement fees. This money is used to help compensate victims of drunk drivers.











## **Open Container Law**

Iowa law and federal safety regulations prevent the driver of any commercial vehicle from having opened or UNOPENED alcohol in the vehicle. Penalty for violation is a fine and 24 hours out of service.

It is illegal in Iowa to drive with an open container of beer or any other alcoholic beverage if the open container is in the passenger compartment of a non-commercial vehicle and if this open beverage container is within reach of the driver. The penalty for violating this open container law can be a \$100 fine or 30 days in jail.











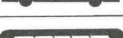

## Iowa Driver Licensing Requirements for Some Common Truck Configurations

Power Unit GVWR	Towed Vehicle GVWR		GCWR		License Class
	Less than 10,001 lbs.	Over 10,000 lbs.	Less than 26,001 lbs.	Over 26,000 lbs.	
 Less than 16,001 lbs.	No towed vehicle				"C" Non-commercial
 Less than 16,001 lbs.	X		X		"C" Non-commercial
 Less than 16,001 lbs.		X	X		"C" Non-commercial
 Less than 16,001 lbs.		X		X	"A" CDL
 16,001 to 26,000 lbs.	No towed vehicle				"D" Non-commercial
 16,001 to 26,000 lbs.	X		X		"D" Non-commercial
 16,001 to 26,000 lbs.		X		X	"A" CDL
 Over 26,000 lbs.	No towed vehicle				"B" CDL
 Over 26,000 lbs.	X			X	"B" CDL
 Over 26,000 lbs.		X		X	"A" CDL

- ☛ "Gross Vehicle Weight Rating" (GVWR) means the weight specified by the manufacturer as the loaded weight of a single vehicle.
- ☛ "Gross Combination Weight Rating" (GCWR) means the combined weights specified by the manufacturer as the loaded weight of each vehicle in a combination of vehicles.
- ☛ "CDL" means Commercial Driver's License.

■ Towed vehicle affects license class

## Iowa Driver Licensing Requirements for Some Common Passenger Vehicles



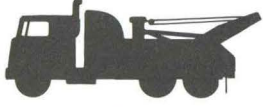
Typical Vehicle	Seating Capacity	Driver Status		GVWR		License Class
		Volunteer	Paid	Less than 26,001 lbs.	Over 26,000 lbs.	
 Less than 16	Less than 16	X		X		"C" Non-commercial
 Less than 16	Less than 16		X	X		"D" Non-commercial
 Less than 16	Less than 16		X	X		"D" Non-commercial
 Less than 16	(Handicap Equipped over 10,000 lbs. GVWR) Less than 16	X	X	X		"C" CDL
 Less than 16	Less than 16		X	X		"D" Non-commercial
 16 or more	16 or more	X	X	X		"C" CDL
 16 or more	16 or more	X	X		X	"B" CDL
 16 or more	16 or more	X	X	X		"C" CDL
 16 or more	16 or more	X	X		X	"B" CDL
 16 or more	16 or more	X	X		X	"B" CDL

- ☛ "Seating Capacity" includes the driver
- ☛ "Gross Vehicle Weight Rating" (GVWR) means the weight specified by the manufacturer as the loaded weight.
- ☛ "CDL" means Commercial Driver's License - Passenger Endorsement Required

*A class "C" non-commercial license is the basic operator's license required to drive a passenger car, pickup, small van, etc.*

**For additional information, call 1-800-532-1121**

# Iowa Operator Licensing Typical Tow Truck Configurations

Tow Truck Alone	Vehicle GVWR	License Class
 Example 1	Less than 16,001 pounds	"C" Non-commercial
 Example 2	16,001 to 26,000 pounds	"D" Non-commercial
 Example 3	over 26,000 pounds	"B" CDL

Tow Truck Example	Towed Vehicle GVWR		GCWR		License Class
	Less than 10,001 lbs.	Over 10,000 lbs.	Less than 26,001 lbs.	Over 26,000 lbs.	
1	X		X		"C" Non-commercial
1		X	X		"C" Non-commercial
1		X		X	"A" CDL
2	X		X		"D" Non-commercial
2		X		X	"A" CDL
3	X			X	"B" CDL
3		X		X	"A" CDL

**Notes:** Commercial Driver's License (CDL) endorsements and restrictions apply to "tow truck alone" operation at all times.

When the towing operation is an emergency "first move" from the site of a highway malfunction or accident to the nearest appropriate repair facility, **then** no CDL endorsements apply to the towed vehicle.

When the towing operation is a "subsequent move" from one repair or disposal facility to another, **then** endorsements to the vehicle being towed are required. **Exception:** A tow truck operator need not possess a passenger endorsement to tow a passenger commercial motor vehicle.

"Gross Vehicle Weight Rating" (GVWR) means the weight specified by the manufacturer as the loaded weight of a single vehicle.

"Gross Combination Weight Rating" (GCWR) means the combined weights specified by the manufacturer as the loaded weight of each vehicle in a combination of vehicles.



## Attention Chauffeurs :

Iowa law requires the following drivers to possess a class "D" (chauffeur's) license **unless they possess a Commercial Driver's License valid for the vehicle when:**

- transporting 15 or fewer persons (including driver) for wages, compensation or hire;
- operating a farm truck-tractor or tractor-trailer within *150 air miles* of the farm and while transporting farm products to or from that farm;
- operating a single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) specified by the manufacturer of 16,001-26,000 pounds, except when the operation by the owner or operator is occasional and merely incidental to the owner or operator's principal business.

**Persons exempt from class "D" (chauffeur's) license requirements are:**

- military personnel while on active duty and while operating military vehicles;
- a farmer or farmer's hired help while operating a truck, other than a truck-tractor, owned by the farmer and used to transport the farmer's own products or property;
- a person operating a farm tractor or implement of husbandry to or from the home farm to any adjacent or nearby land;

- a **volunteer** firefighter or **volunteer** ambulance driver while operating a fire, ambulance or rescue vehicle;
- a Department of Corrections or a Department of Human Services employee transporting persons in an automobile.




The class "D" (chauffeur's) license will have an endorsement on the license according to the type of vehicle in which the test was taken.

**Endorsements:**

1. Truck-tractor semitrailer combination. (Also valid for endorsements "2" & "3").
2. Vehicle with GVWR 16,001 or more pounds (not to exceed 26,000 pounds), not valid for truck-tractor semitrailer combination. (Also valid for endorsement "3").
3. Passenger vehicle designed to carry 15 or fewer persons, including the driver.

A class "D" license is also valid to operate a private passenger car or other vehicles, except a motorcycle or a vehicle requiring specific licensing to operate.

### Some Examples of Vehicles Requiring a Class "D" License

	<b>Farm semi operated by persons engaged in their own farming operations.</b>
	<b>16,001- 26,000 pound GVWR trucks</b>
	<b>Passenger vehicles and school buses with seating capacity of 15 or fewer (including driver)</b>
<b>Class "D" license fees: \$16 - 2 years / \$32 - 4 years (initial and renewal)</b>	

**The chauffeur's license is NOT valid as a Commercial Driver's License**



## CDL skill/driving test sites on an as available basis.

Contact the local driver license station for times.

Town	Day	Town	Day
Algona	Saturday	Indianola	Tuesday
Ames	Tuesday/Saturday	Iowa City	Tuesday-Saturday
Atlantic	Monday - Friday	Iowa Falls	Tuesday
Audubon	Thursday	Keokuk	Friday
Belle Plaine	Friday	Knoxville	Wednesday
Belmond	Friday	LeMars	Friday
Bloomfield	Friday	Manchester	Friday/Saturday
Boone	Thursday	Marshalltown	Thursday/Friday/Sat
Burlington	Tuesday/Wednesday/Sat	Mason City	Tuesday/Friday/Sat
Carroll	Friday/Saturday	Mt. Pleasant	Thursday
Cedar Rapids	Monday-Saturday	Muscatine	Tuesday/Wednesday/Sat
Centerville	Thursday	Nevada	Friday
Charles City	Wednesday	New Hampton	Saturday
Cherokee	Thursday	Newton	Tuesday/Wednesday
Clarion	Friday	Northwood	Alternate Thursdays
Clear Lake	Friday	Oelwein	Friday
Clinton	Tuesday/Friday/Sat	Onawa	Wednesday
Council Bluffs	Monday-Saturday	Osage	Wednesday
Cresco	Thursday	Osceola	Tuesday
Creston	Saturday	Oskaloosa	Tuesday/Saturday
Davenport	Monday-Saturday	Ottumwa	Tuesday/Wednesday/Sat
Decorah	Tuesday	Pella	Friday (1st & 3rd)
Denison	Tuesday	Perry	Wednesday
Des Moines-Park Fair Mall (Second & Euclid)	Monday-Saturday	Pocahontas	Thursday
DeWitt	Wednesday	Red Oak	Monday-Friday
Dubuque	Monday-Friday	Rock Rapids	Thursday
Dyersville	Wednesday	Sac City	Tuesday
Eagle Grove	Friday	Sheldon	Saturday
Emmetsburg	Tuesday	Shenandoah	Wednesday
Estherville	Wednesday	Sibley	Wednesday (1st & 3rd)
Fairfield	Thursday	Sioux Center	Tuesday (2nd)
Forest City	Wednesday	Sioux City	Tuesday-Saturday
Fort Dodge	Tuesday/Friday/Sat	Spencer	Tuesday
Fort Madison	Thursday	Spirit Lake	Friday
Glenwood	Monday-Friday	Storm Lake	Tuesday/Saturday
Grinnell	Wednesday	Toledo	Thursday
Hampton	Saturday	Washington	Wednesday
Harlan	Saturday	Waterloo	Monday-Friday
Humboldt	Wednesday	Webster City	Thursday
Ida Grove	Wednesday	West Union	Saturday
Independence	Tuesday	Winterset	Wednesday



**Iowa Department  
of Transportation**

### Driver Services telephone numbers:

1-800-532-1121

515-244-9124

### Motor Vehicle Enforcement telephone numbers:

Commercial Vehicle Information 1-800-925-6469

Motor Carrier Services 515-237-3264



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