



U.S. Department of Transportation
**Federal Motor Carrier Safety
Administration**

Commercial Motor Vehicle Awareness Training



**Participant's Guide
2011**

CMV Awareness Training Participants Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Commercial motor vehicle (CMV) regulations exist to ensure the safety of the motoring public; however, the same regulations that were created to ensure the trucking industry operates safely created a “knowledge gap” between certified CMV inspectors and others in law enforcement.

In response to this “knowledge gap”, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) jointly developed this “North American Standard CMV Awareness Training” for officers from state, local and county law enforcement agencies.

The purpose of this awareness training is to provide law enforcement officers with the safety and enforcement information for handling accidents and traffic violations involving CMVs or buses.

If there are any questions, law enforcement officers should always refer to department policy and take appropriate action.

The continuing theme of this training is officer safety. Module 1 is dedicated to officer safety and there are safety tips located in every module of the training.

Regardless of previous experiences executing traffic stops on a CMV, this training is designed to arm officers with the information necessary to deal with the encounter.

The goal of the Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) Awareness Training is to educate law officials on the correct way to do basic enforcement on CMVs. This course is also concerned with officer safety while dealing with CMVs.

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OFFICER SAFETY AND THE CMV

What is a Commercial Motor Vehicle?

A **commercial vehicle** is a type of motor vehicle that may be used for transporting goods or passengers. A CMV is defined as:

- A single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 pounds or more
- A combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 26,001 pounds or more if the vehicle(s) towed has a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds
- Vehicles that carry 16 or more passengers, including the driver
- Any size vehicle that transports hazardous materials and that requires federal placarding

CMVs, which include trucks and buses, require the attention of all law enforcement officers. In this module, we will discuss the procedures and practices for ensuring officer safety as well as providing encouragement and reasons to consider stopping CMVs.

Remember: Always refer to your departmental policies and guidelines concerning your own safety practices.

Reasons to stop a CMV:

The same reasons you would stop a car or van:

- Distracted driving
- Tailgating
- Traffic control devices
- School/work zones
- Unsafe speed/aggressive driving
- Alcohol/drug impaired driving

Remember: CMVs do commit moving violations and CMVs are involved in accidents.

Planning Ahead When Stopping the CMV

Officers must plan ahead for this type of stop. It is very important to consider these things when stopping commercial motor vehicles:

CMVs need more distance to stop.

In general, trucks take longer to stop than cars because of their size and weight. Do not expect the same stop response time from a CMV as you would from a passenger vehicle. A fully loaded tractor-trailer may take more than 400 feet to come to a complete stop.

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CMVs need wider areas to park.

Officers should avoid stopping the vehicle on steep uphill or downhill grades; on soft, narrow or slanted shoulders; on curves where approaching drivers can't see; on bridges where available space is limited; and during other conditions when the traffic density and speed will not ensure visibility.

CMVs need more distance to re-enter the roadway.

After the enforcement contact, direct and assist the driver in safely returning the vehicle into the traffic flow. Advise the driver how you will assist the vehicle re-entering traffic to safely reenter the traffic flow.

Where to Park the Vehicle

Stay out of blind spots to ensure you can be identified.

Officers should position themselves a little more to the left than with a passenger vehicle. With heightened security concerns, drivers have been advised that they must recognize law enforcement before stopping. The size of the vehicle affects the distance from which headlights and taillights can be seen. Stay out of the driver's blind spots.

Evaluate your position relative to the commercial motor vehicle.

Avoid pulling beside the CMV and do not use your vehicle as a "rolling road block."

Approaching the CMV

Approaching the commercial motor vehicle requires additional safety considerations.

- **Look for placards identifying presence of hazardous materials.**
 - While approaching the commercial motor vehicle, check for placards identifying the presence of hazardous materials. The absence of placards does **NOT** always mean there are not hazardous materials on board, it may only mean smaller quantities are on board that do not require placarding.
- **Watch for leaks and spills underneath the CMV, as well as unusual odors. If necessary call for a certified CMV inspector. Consider passenger side approaches.**
 - Passenger side approaches provide the most protection from passing traffic. Always be aware of passengers and where they might be.
- **Watch the side mirrors.**
 - While approaching the commercial motor vehicle, keep an eye on the side mirrors so you know what is going on in the cab. The CMV is often the driver's second home. Commonly there are animals, such as a dog, in the cab with the driver.

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Initial Contact with the Driver

Contact with a CMV driver presents unique officer safety challenges as your visibility into the vehicle and of the driver is limited.

Officers should exercise caution when making initial contact with the driver. The CMV is often the driver's second home. Commonly there are animals, such as a dog, in the cab with the driver. Passengers may be in the sleeper berth area which is located behind the cab.

Documents to Collect

Initially, instruct the driver to stay in the vehicle. Remaining hands-free as much as possible is ideal. Control the flow of paper work from the driver. Collect the driver's CDL, insurance, and registration only.

Initial documents to collect from the driver include:

- The driver's commercial drivers license (CDL)
- Proof of insurance
- The vehicle registration

If handed any of the other documents, hand them back politely. This is a traffic stop. Additional documentation is not required from a passenger car and is not necessary during a CMV stop.

Each state has an agency responsible for CMV enforcement that is available to assist when requested. Familiarization with jurisdictional resources is mandatory.

Interviewing the Driver

- Exercise caution when approaching the driver's door during traffic stops as it may open unexpectedly causing injury or forcing the officer into the traffic lane.
- Expedite the transaction in order to minimize the hazards to officers and drivers. Be brief, courteous, and professional. At this point, evaluate the driver's condition during the initial interview. Look for signs of fatigue, contraband, and alcohol/drug use.
- Generally, avoid climbing up on the cab to the door.
- If asked to exit the vehicle, move the driver to the front of the vehicle to talk. Driver contact is best done at the front of the vehicle. This also allows the driver the opportunity to return to the cab for additional documents.

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- The officer should keep the driver between themselves and the vehicle and make sure to be facing the on-coming traffic.

Writing the Ticket

- Check the appropriate box indicating that it is a CMV!
- Confirm the CDL
- Confirm the Registration
- Validate which regulation/law/statutes to cite on the ticket
- And again, check the appropriate box indicating that it is a CMV!

Re-entering the Traffic Flow

Always assist the CMV back into traffic.

- Direct and assist the driver in safely returning the vehicle into the traffic flow
- Advise the driver how you will assist the vehicle for re-entering traffic
- When appropriate, advise the driver to use the shoulder as an acceleration lane before entering the flow of traffic
- Enter traffic to provide a clear lane for the CMV driver whenever possible
- Remain behind the CMV until it has reached highway speed

CMV Search

- Never search a CMV alone
- Contact a CMV certified inspector for assistance

Be aware that CMV drivers might carry things that seem out of the ordinary, but are there for good reason. For example, a club in the cab could very well be used to check the tires. These and various other tools serve legitimate purposes.

Never search a CMV alone. Each state has an agency responsible for CMV enforcement that is available to assist when requested. Officers should familiarize themselves with the resources within their respective jurisdictions.

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When to Call

Traffic enforcement activities involving CMV drivers require good judgment on the part of officers because their actions could affect the driver's CDL status.

Contact a **CMV certified inspector** immediately if:

- You observe a seriously unsafe condition
- You think the truck warrants further inspection
- You consider not allowing the vehicle to proceed
- You stop a driver with a Mexican or Canadian CDL

Additional CMV Awareness Resources

- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
www.fmcsa.dot.gov
- Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance
www.cvsa.org
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
www.theiacp.org
- American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators
www.aamva.org
- Federal Highway Administration
www.fhwa.dot.gov
- National Highway Transportation Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.gov
- TACT (Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks) Program
<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/tact/index.htm>