

## What is a Troops to Trucks Program?

Troops to Trucks (or Troops in Trucks) describes any program with the purpose of expediting the commercial driver's licensing process for military veterans and service members. These programs vary in scope of both services provided (often including a combination of a Skills Test waiver, Knowledge Test waiver, or On-Base Training) and who is eligible (e.g. some services apply only to veterans, whereas others apply currently enlisted service members, and even family members, as well).

Over the past several years, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has worked to simultaneously address issues of veteran unemployment and the commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operator shortage. Through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the FMCSA is providing \$1 million in grants to fund programs connecting veterans to commercial bus and truck driving careers. These programs include training for veterans without prior truck driving experience as well as a pilot program that allows select military personnel between the ages of 18 and 20 to waive the age requirement of 21 for operating a CMV in interstate commerce. Furthermore, the FMCSA now allows military veterans to waive a commercial driver's license (CDL) skills test so long as they've been "employed within the last 90 days in a military position requiring the operation of a military motor vehicle equivalent to a Commercial Motor Vehicle."



# Why Create a Troops to Trucks Program?

## **Benefits to Veterans**

According to the 2011 report “[Factors affecting hiring decisions about veterans](#),” 69 percent of veterans who served following 9/11 said that finding a job was their greatest challenge to adjusting to civilian life. This includes veterans trained to operate heavy trucks, of which there were approximately 10,000. Skills obtained in the military have not traditionally been recognized as applicable to civilian careers, forcing veterans to attend costly and redundant re-training and licensing programs before being able to apply for private commercial motor vehicle jobs.

## **Benefits to the Trucking Industry**

According to a [2018 Research in Transportation Economics article](#), 2015 saw a shortage of close to 45,000 truck drivers, resulting in hundreds of daily shipments being refused by trucking companies. Because the United States will continue to rely on freight for the foreseeable future, and because demand for freight services are growing rather than remaining static, some estimates suggest that it will be necessary to hire almost a hundred thousand each year in order to adequately address growing freight needs.

# What Does a Troops to Trucks Program Consist Of?

## **Skills Test Waiver**

The FMCSA allows commercial licensing agencies to waive the Skills Test (driving test) if the applicant can provide proof that they’ve formally and regularly operated a military motor vehicle equivalent to a commercial motor vehicle for at least two years, within the last 90 days. This rule has been adopted by all of the United States.

## **Knowledge Test Waiver (Even Exchange)**

The FMCSA allows States to waive the Knowledge Test (written test) for veterans with the appropriate heavy truck experience, so long as the applicant can provide proof that that they’ve formally and regularly operated a military motor vehicle equivalent to a commercial motor vehicle for at least two years, within the last 90 days. Effectively, applicants exchange their military heavy truck license for a civilian commercial driver’s license. As of this writing, only Illinois, Wisconsin, and North Carolina have implemented Even Exchange (though Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Missouri, New Mexico, and Virginia are currently working towards implementation).

Illinois has created a strong system for expediting the Even Exchange process. Prior to the applicant entering the state driver’s license agency, the applicant’s commanding officer completes the Even Exchange application and signs off on necessary documentation (e.g. proof of experience and training), which is then reviewed by the State Driver’s Licensing Agency’s (SDLA) CDL Division. Once the application is approved, the CDL Division contacts both the Commanding Officer and the applicant, and sends a corresponding approval notice. The applicant then presents this approval notice and all related documentation to a CDL facility in order to obtain their license. As a result, the applicant doesn’t need to coordinate between the SDLA and the military base—it’s all taken care of in advance.

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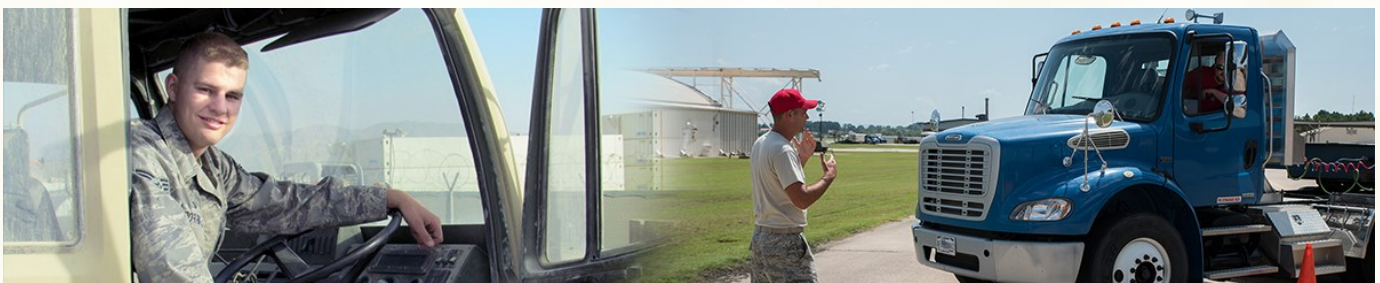
## **On-Base Training**

The SDLA approves one or more military base to be a third party testing site, where applicants lacking experience with heavy trucks can receive CDL training. As third party testing sites, these military bases must comply with the same standards required by other third party testing sites:

- Training and certification of all examiners by the SDLA
- Compliance with Motor Carrier Safety Regulations
- Compliance with all facility, program and examiner requirements
- A formal signed agreement created with the SDLA
- Access to the program and all testing records by the SDLA and FMCSA
- Annual site and program audits

## **On-Base Testing**

Mobile RMV/DMV units conduct CDL testing on military bases, so that applicants don't need to travel to an state driver's licensing agency location.



## **How Troops to Trucks Programs are Implemented**

Troops to Trucks programs generally emerge from a partnership between the SDLA and one or more of the State's U.S. military bases. Illinois's Even Exchange program was initiated when representatives from the U.S. Army and Air Force approached Illinois Secretary of State's office to promote the military's heavy truck training program. As a way to address the driver shortage and improve employment outcomes for veterans, Secretary of State Jesse White—a veteran himself—proposed a bill that would enable veterans with the appropriate heavy truck experience to obtain their Illinois CDL without completing the Knowledge test (i.e. the written test). The bill went through the legislative process in the senate and the house, and was put into law on August 2017.

For Virginia's on-base CDL training program, the SDLA collaborated with military personnel to create a CDL curriculum in line with all SDLA and FMCSA licensing requirements. As a result, military base personnel who were approved to conduct Knowledge Test training. The SDLA's mobile unit travels to the military base to administer the Knowledge Test, collects required documents (proof of identity, residency, legal presence, social security number, medical certifications) and issue Commercial Instruction Permits (CIP). The approved military base personnel conduct behind the wheel training, and also administer the skills test. Upon passing the skills test, the mobile SDLA unit issues the CDL.

## State Contacts

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### Illinois Even Exchange

CDL Division  
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[CDLSafeRideIllinois@ilsos.net](mailto:CDLSafeRideIllinois@ilsos.net)

### Wisconsin Even Exchange

Driver Eligibility Unit  
608-264-7447

### Kentucky (In-House Military CDL Program)

Lt. Col. David Eckley  
502-626-1999

## Additional Resources

[FMCSA Military Driver Programs](#)

[FMCSA Military Driver Programs Brochure](#)

[FMCSA Skills Test Waiver Form](#)

[Virginia Troops to Trucks Program](#)

[Virginia Troops to Trucks Brochure](#)

[Virginia Troops to Trucks Checklist](#)

[Virginia Troops to Trucks Webinar](#)

[Blog: Five of the Most Forward Thinking Troops to Trucks Programs](#)

[Blog: Troops to Trucks—Trucking Companies Look to Military Veterans to Address Truck Driver Shortages](#)

## About UMassSafe

*UMassSafe is a multidisciplinary traffic safety research program housed in the University of Massachusetts Transportation Center in the College of Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Working for many state and federal agencies, UMassSafe collects and analyzes crash related data, provides online data access, develops training materials and examines data quality challenges within the databases, providing recommendations for improvements. UMassSafe developed the Commercial Vehicle Safety Technical Assistance Center (CV-STAC) to promote partnerships between state agencies, universities and law enforcement in order to improve commercial motor vehicle safety.*

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