

## Stay in Control

Safely operating a commercial vehicle requires more than just knowing how to shift its gears. Driving, by definition, is a complex task that requires judgment, skill, practice and knowledge of the rules of the road. But it becomes even more challenging, for example, when piloting a 34,000-pound rig down the freeway in an icy rain. To safely drive a commercial vehicle, you must understand how to adjust your driving to match traffic, road and weather conditions. And you must know the law. For example, speed limits for trucks will differ from automobiles, based on the commercial vehicle designation, weight restrictions and the type of road being traveled.

When approaching a downhill grade in a truck, it is a good idea to shift to a lower gear before starting down the hill. Otherwise, you may need to use the brakes too much, causing overheating and possible loss of braking power.

To maintain the best control on a curve, slow to a safe speed before entering the curve, then accelerate slightly through it. Braking in a curve is dangerous because you may lock the wheels and cause a skid.

## The Road Ahead

Following vehicles too closely is dangerous and, depending on the size of your vehicle, it may be illegal. According to Michigan law, outside the corporate limits of a city or village, vehicles with gross weights over 5,000 pounds (loaded or unloaded) must not follow each other closer than 500 feet except when passing.

Not only is it important to maintain a safe following distance, it is important to watch the road ahead. To provide time to react to changes in traffic, you should look ahead at least 12 seconds' worth of travel time. This can be done by selecting a fixed object on the road ahead and counting "one thousand one, one thousand two..." until the front of your vehicle passes the object. If you have not counted to "one thousand twelve," you should be looking farther ahead.

## Long Loads and Vehicle Height

If a load extends 4 feet or more past the rear of

a vehicle's bed or body, a red flag or cloth at least 12 inches square (during the day) or a red light (at night) must be displayed at the extreme rear end of the load.

Knowing how tall your vehicle is can help prevent crashing into objects overhead such as a bridge or viaduct. The maximum height allowed for vehicles on Michigan roads and highways is 13 feet, 6 inches.

## Using Mirrors

You need to know what drivers behind you are doing and how close they are to your vehicle. Not knowing could make it dangerous to change lanes, pass another vehicle or merge onto a highway. Commercial vehicles with a capacity of 1,000 pounds or more must have one outside rearview mirror on each side of the vehicle.

For rearview mirrors to be effective they must be properly adjusted. However, even careful adjustment will leave blind spots – areas to the side and rear – that cannot be seen in the mirrors. To offset this problem, turn your head to check what the mirrors do not show.

## When There are Problems

If you park a disabled vehicle on the shoulder of a road, warning devices must be set out. The law requires that warning devices be placed 100 feet in front of and behind the vehicle, and at the road's edge within 10 feet of the vehicle's front or rear end.

Some problems may not require stopping on the side of the road. For example, your vehicle's brakes may become wet after driving through deep water or during heavy rain. To dry wet brakes, slow down and then apply the brakes gently until they work properly again.

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# Your Michigan Chauffeur License



Secretary of State  
**Jocelyn Benson**  
Michigan.gov/SOS

This pamphlet explains Michigan's chauffeur license requirements. The information can also help you prepare for the knowledge test you must pass in order to receive your chauffeur license.

You can take the written test at any Secretary of State office. No driving skills test is required, unless you have never been licensed.

The chauffeur license is issued in standard and enhanced versions. The standard chauffeur license costs \$35. The enhanced version costs \$50 and is a federally approved identity and citizenship document that allows you to re-enter the U.S. by land or sea from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda or the Caribbean. For more information about standard and enhanced licenses, visit the Department of State website at [Michigan.gov/SOS](http://Michigan.gov/SOS).

## Requirements

Unless exempt (as explained later in this pamphlet) a chauffeur license is required if you:

- Are employed for the principal purpose of operating a motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 10,000 pounds or more. **Note:** *Michigan law considers someone to be **employed for the principal purpose of operating a motor vehicle** "when the person's employment customarily involves the necessary use of a motor vehicle for hire or for transporting passengers for hire, or for transporting for gain or hire any merchandise for display, sale or delivery."* [MCL 257.6(2)]
- Operate a motor vehicle as a carrier of passengers or as a common or contract carrier of property.
- Operate a bus or a school bus.

## Medical Examiner's Certification

A medical examiner's certification is needed if you operate a motor vehicle:

- With a gross vehicle weight (GVW), gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), gross combination weight (GCW) or gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 10,001 pounds or more.

- Designed to transport 16 or more passengers (including the driver).
- Used to transport hazardous materials.

For more information or to obtain forms, contact the Michigan Trucking Association at 517-321-1951 or visit its website at [www.mitrucking.org](http://www.mitrucking.org).

## Exemptions

Some drivers do not need a chauffeur license:

- A farmer or farmer's employee operating a vehicle exclusively in connection with the farming operation.
- A firefighter or member of a fire department operating an ambulance.
- A firefighter or police officer operating equipment used exclusively in connection with his or her employment.
- Utility company employees who drive trucks used to transport employees, materials and tools.
- Service or repair personnel who operate motor vehicles to carry their tools and transport parts or appliances only incidentally in connection with their employment.
- Emergency medical services personnel operating an ambulance.
- County road commission employees and other local government employees who do not drive their own vehicles and whose work consists of hauling road-building materials and supplies for the road commission or for other municipal purposes.
- Michigan Department of Transportation employees whose work consists of operating vehicles with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or more to transport highway and bridge maintenance materials and supplies for state trunkline maintenance.
- A person operating a motor vehicle for a volunteer program who only receives reimbursement for vehicle operating costs.

- A person who operates a motor home for personal pleasure.
- A parent or parent's designee for the purpose of transporting pupils to or from school and school-related events.
- Operate a taxi, limousine or transportation network companies. Note: Michigan law requires limousine drivers to carry a current copy of their driving record in the limousine, available for review if requested by a prospective passenger. (MCL 257.208b)

## Caution

Drivers who need a chauffeur license may also need a Commercial Driver License (CDL) to operate:

- A vehicle towing a trailer or other vehicle with a GVWR of 10,001 pounds or more when the GCWR is 26,001 pounds or more.
- A vehicle (including buses) having a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more.
- A vehicle under 26,001 pounds GVWR that:
  - Is designed to carry 16 or more people (including the driver);
  - Carries hazardous materials in amounts requiring placarding.

If you need a CDL, visit the department website at [Michigan.gov/SOS](http://Michigan.gov/SOS) or a Secretary of State office for more information. CDLs are issued in standard and enhanced versions. Please note that in some instances, even though a chauffeur license is not required, a CDL may be needed.

## Behind the Wheel

Remember to park at least 30 feet from a stop sign or traffic signal. Michigan law requires you to signal before turning or changing lanes. Start signaling at least 100 feet before you plan to turn. Doing so allows other drivers an opportunity to slow down or change lanes to avoid a crash. A truck with gross weight of 10,000 pounds or more, traveling on a freeway with a maximum speed greater than 70 miles per hour, must not travel faster than 65 miles per hour.