

# *The International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA)*

*An Information Guide for  
Michigan Taxpayers*



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## Introduction

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Michigan is a member of the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA). All 48 states in the continental United States as well as 10 Canadian Provinces participate in the IFTA.

Membership in the IFTA is a benefit to both the interstate motor carrier and the participating jurisdictions. The primary advantage for both the carriers and the jurisdictions is that the carriers license and file tax returns in the base jurisdiction only. Mileage and fuel purchases from all jurisdictions are reported on one return and the base jurisdiction is responsible for paying the other jurisdictions on the carrier's behalf.

IFTA is administered primarily through the IFTA governing documents, which include the Articles of Agreement, the Procedures Manual and the Audit Manual. In addition, the IFTA carrier may be subject to Michigan statute including the Motor Carrier Fuel Tax Act (PA 119 of 1980), the Motor Fuel Tax Act (PA 403 of 2000) and the Revenue Act (PA 122 of 1941).

## Definitions

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**Audit** means the physical examination of a licensee's records and source documents to determine the accuracy of the reported information on the licensee's tax returns.

**Base Jurisdiction** means the member jurisdiction where qualified motor vehicles are based for vehicle registration purposes, and

1. where the operational control and operational records of the licensee's qualified motor vehicles are maintained or can be made available, and;

2. where some travel is accrued by qualified motor vehicles within the fleet. The commissioners of two or more affected jurisdictions may allow a person to consolidate several fleets that would otherwise be based in two or more jurisdictions.

**Cancellation** means the termination of an IFTA license by the licensing jurisdiction.

**The Department** means the Michigan Department of Treasury.

**Fleet** means one or more \*qualified motor vehicles.

**In-Jurisdiction Distance** means the total number of miles operated by a licensee's qualified motor vehicles within a jurisdiction, including miles operated under an IFTA temporary decal permit. In-jurisdiction distance does not include miles operated on a fuel tax trip permit or exempted from fuel taxation by a jurisdiction.

**IPC** means IFTA Processing Consortium. It is the web-based system Michigan uses to administer IFTA. Licensed carriers can access the IPC through a secured login and complete IFTA transactions (file/pay returns, order decals, generate temporary permits, etc.) once logged in.

**Jurisdiction** means a state of the U.S., the District of Columbia, a province or territory of Canada, or a state of the United Mexican States.

**Lessee** means the party acquiring the use of equipment with or without a driver from another.

**Lessor** means the party granting the use of equipment with or without a driver to another.

**Licensee** means a person who holds a valid IFTA license issued by the base jurisdiction.

**Motor Fuel** means all fuel placed in the fuel supply tank of qualified motor vehicles.

**\*Qualified Motor Vehicles** means a motor vehicle used, designed, or maintained for transportation of persons or property and:

- 1) Having two or more axles and a gross vehicle weight or registered gross vehicle weight exceeding 26,000 pounds or 11,797 kilograms; or
- 2) Having three or more axles regardless of weight; or
- 3) Is used in combination, when the weight of such combination exceeds 26,000 pounds or 11,797 kilograms gross vehicle or registered gross vehicle weight. **Qualified motor vehicles do not include recreational vehicles.**

**Recreational Vehicle** means a vehicle used for personal pleasure and not used in connection with any business endeavor.

**Revocation** means withdrawal of the license and privileges by the licensing jurisdiction.

**Suspension** means temporary removal of privileges granted to the licensee by the licensing jurisdiction.

**Total Distance** means all miles traveled during the tax reporting period by every qualified vehicle in the licensee's fleet, regardless of whether the miles are considered taxable or non-taxable by a jurisdiction which is auto calculated in the IPC.

## **IFTA Licensing**

Anyone operating qualified motor vehicles interstate must have valid IFTA credentials. IFTA credentials consist of one license and a set of decals for each qualified motor vehicle. IFTA credentials are valid from January 1 – December 31 and must be renewed annually.

### **IFTA Account Number**

The IFTA Articles of Agreement require the IFTA account number to be either a federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) or the social security number of the owner. EINs are available online to all carriers. Visit the IRS Web site at [www.irs.gov/businesses](http://www.irs.gov/businesses) and click on Employer ID Numbers. Michigan encourages all carriers to apply for an EIN to help prevent identity theft.

### **License Applications**

A Michigan interstate motor carrier must complete an annual renewal in the IPC to receive current year decals. After completing the renewal in the IPC, the license is immediately available by clicking "View License Document".

First time licensees or licensees who were not licensed for IFTA fuel taxes in the previous year must complete a *State of Michigan IFTA License Application* online at [michigan.gov/ifta](http://michigan.gov/ifta). New applications go through a review process and may take up to 30 days to be fully processed. Applications with incomplete or invalid

information may result in processing delays in excess of 30 days.

### **IFTA Credentials**

IFTA credentials consist of one license and one set of decals for each qualifying vehicle. One license is issued to each new IFTA licensee and it is the responsibility of the carrier to ensure a copy is in each qualified vehicle travelling interstate.

Decals must be affixed to the exterior of both sides of the cab. In the case of transporters, manufacturers, dealers or drive-away operations, the decals need not be permanently affixed but may be temporarily displayed in a visible manner on both sides of the cab.

Qualified motor vehicles operated by more than one IFTA licensee during the license year must display IFTA decals for each active licensee concurrently.

Michigan does not charge a fee for the IFTA license or decals, however motor carriers are encouraged to order only the number of decal sets they will need. **In the event of an audit, a satisfactory accounting for all decals issued to a motor carrier must be provided.**

### **Replacement Decals**

Replacement decals are available if the original decals are lost, destroyed, undelivered or stolen. Replacement decals must also be requested if a vehicle is sold and a new vehicle is purchased. A request for replacement decals can be completed in the IFTA IPC system.

Carriers should also complete a *Statement Claiming Lost, Destroyed, Undelivered or Stolen State of Michigan IFTA Fuel Decal(s)* (Form 2824).

### **Grace Period**

Carriers renewing their IFTA license and decals have a two month grace period (January and February) to display the new decals as long as their renewal has been completed before the current license expires. During this grace period, carriers must display valid prior year decals, carry the prior year license along with the current

active license. All activity during the grace period must be reported on the first quarter IFTA return.

### **Cancelling an IFTA License**

If a motor carrier ceases operating qualified motor vehicles interstate, the IFTA license should be cancelled. Carriers should complete an *IFTA Cancellation of Account (Form 4460)* within fifteen (15) days after discontinuance. Discontinuance requests received after the fifteen (15) days will be subject to a Department assigned discontinuance date. IFTA credentials are non-transferrable and IFTA carriers must destroy all copies of the license and all decals.

IFTA returns must be filed through the date of cancellation of the account, even if there is no activity. If returns are not filed for all periods for which the carrier has been licensed, estimated assessments will be issued.

### **License Revocation**

An IFTA motor carrier license may be revoked for failure to file returns and/or make full payment of the tax due. Before a license is revoked, the Department will schedule a show cause hearing. The carrier will be notified by certified mail of the date, time and place of the hearing. If the carrier fails to appear at the hearing, the carrier's IFTA license will be immediately revoked.

**Once an IFTA license is revoked, the motor carrier or the motor carrier's representative may not operate qualified motor vehicles in any IFTA jurisdiction.** The Michigan State Police, Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division and all IFTA jurisdictions are notified of the revocation.

### **License Reinstatement**

Once an IFTA license is revoked, the motor carrier has to comply with certain conditions to obtain a reinstatement. If the license is reinstated, the motor carrier will receive a written notice. A copy of this notice must be carried in the cab of each qualified motor vehicle as proof of the reinstatement. The

Department notifies the Michigan State Police, Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division and all other IFTA jurisdictions of the reinstatement but it may take several days for the information to reach roadside enforcement personnel. Carrying proof of the reinstatement in each vehicle will avoid having a vehicle taken out of service unnecessarily.

In addition to the proof of reinstatement, the motor carrier will receive a letter outlining the continuing requirements of the motor carrier. If these requirements are not met, the carrier's IFTA license will be immediately revoked without benefit of a show cause hearing.

The Department is under no obligation to reinstate the IFTA license of a motor carrier who continues to violate the statute. A motor carrier revoked by one IFTA jurisdiction cannot be licensed by another jurisdiction.

### **Bonding**

A bond may be required as a condition of licensing or reinstatement. Late filing of returns, late payment of tax, penalty and interest or failure to demonstrate sound financial standing are some examples of situations in which a bond may be required.

The bond may be in the form of a surety bond, cash bond or other instrument approved by the Department. Carriers required to post a bond will be notified of that requirement in writing.

### **Temporary Decal Permits**

Temporary decal permits are issued in lieu of IFTA decals to allow a licensed motor carrier to operate a qualified motor vehicle until the permanent decal is received. Temporary decal permits are valid for 30 days, they are vehicle specific and only one permit can be requested for each vehicle per license year. The permit must be carried in the vehicle listed on the permit along with a valid IFTA license. There is no charge for a temporary permit.

A licensed motor carrier requesting a temporary permit must complete the request in the IPC

by clicking "View/Generate Temporary Decal Permits".

### **Fuel Permits**

Fuel permits are issued in lieu of IFTA licensing to those carriers who do not regularly travel interstate. When operating under a fuel permit the vehicular activity is not reported on an IFTA return. The fee for a Michigan fuel permit is \$20 plus any fees assessed by the permitting service. A Michigan fuel permit is vehicle specific and is valid for five consecutive days. Carriers are limited to three fuel permits per calendar year and this limit is based on the USDOT number associated with the permits.

An unlicensed carrier traveling interstate must obtain a fuel permit for each jurisdiction into which they intend to travel. Fuel permit requirements and costs vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Contact information for each jurisdiction can be obtained at the IFTA, Inc. website at [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org).

### **IFTA Tax Returns**

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IFTA tax returns are due quarterly on April 30, July 31, October 31 and January 31 each year. If the due date falls on a weekend or holiday the return is due on the next business day. IFTA licensees must file a return even if there was no activity during the quarter. **Carriers who file no activity returns or who do not travel outside Michigan for three consecutive quarters may be discontinued or denied renewal.**

Effective December 2014, all Michigan IFTA tax returns must be electronically filed in the IPC. Paper forms will no longer be mailed each quarter. All tax rates are populated in the IPC and calculations are done automatically, eliminating the possibility for many common errors. Previously filed returns are also available for viewing/printing on the IPC system.

### **IFTAE-File**

E-Filing IFTA returns is mandatory and can be completed using the IPC. Filing electronically allows the carrier to submit a return where the calculations are error free. The IPC is a free,

secure web-based system that does not require new computer software. Carriers receive immediate confirmation upon submission of the return.

Carriers may also make payments of any IFTA tax due on the IPC, order additional decals, generate temporary decal permits, view/print previously filed IFTA returns, and more.

### **Lease Agreements**

Carriers who enter into a lease agreement should ensure that the agreement specifies the party who is responsible for obtaining the IFTA license and filing the IFTA tax returns. **If the lease agreement does not identify the party responsible for filing the IFTA returns, both parties may be held jointly and severally liable for the IFTA taxes.**

Licensed IFTA carriers involved in a lease agreement are required to discontinue their own IFTA license or file an IFTA return. A complete copy of the lease agreement should accompany the request for discontinuance.

### **Record Keeping**

Accurate records of mileage and fuel purchases for each licensed IFTA vehicle is required to properly prepare the quarterly IFTA returns. Records must be kept for each member jurisdiction through which the carrier travels.

Records must be kept for a minimum of four years from the due date of the return or the date the return was filed, whichever is later. Records may be maintained on paper, microfilm, microfiche, digital imaging or other means of storage which has been approved, in writing, by the Department.

Operational records must be maintained in the carrier's base jurisdiction. If the records are not maintained in the base jurisdiction, the carrier may be responsible for expenses, in the event of an audit, if the auditors must travel to a location outside of the base jurisdiction to review the records.

### **Mileage Records**

Total miles for all qualified motor vehicles must be reported on the IFTA return. Total miles include both taxable and exempt miles. Mileage which is exempt from taxation varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Exempt mileage information for all IFTA jurisdictions is available on the IFTA, Inc. website at [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org). Jurisdictions may also be contacted directly.

### **Trip Reports**

A motor carrier's daily vehicle mileage and fuel report is approved as a source document if it is properly completed. Trip reports should include the following information:

- Date of the trip (beginning and ending dates)
- Trip origin and destination
- Route of travel (list the highway used when entering and leaving a jurisdiction).
- Total trip miles (beginning and ending odometer or hubometer readings)
- Mileage by jurisdiction (odometer or hubometer readings at each jurisdiction line)
- Power unit number or vehicle identification number (VIN)
- Vehicle fleet number
- Licensee's name

### **Fuel Purchase Records**

A motor carrier must have adequate records to support the tax paid fuel credit on the IFTA return. **If sufficient documentation is unavailable, all claims for tax-paid fuel will be disallowed on the return.**

### **Bulk Storage**

Motor carriers who have bulk storage in Michigan must maintain complete records of all motor fuel purchased, received and withdrawn. Bulk fuel records must include all of the following:

- Inventory reconciliation
- The date of each receipt of fuel
- The name and address of the person from

whom the fuel was purchased or received.

- The number of gallons received.
- The type of fuel

Records for withdrawals from bulk storage must include all of the following:

- Date of withdrawal from storage.
- Number of gallons withdrawn.
- Type of fuel withdrawn.
- The vehicle or equipment into which the fuel was placed. If the fuel is placed in a qualified motor vehicle, the unit number or base plate number and the two letter designation of the jurisdiction that issued the decals must be recorded.

### **Retail Purchases of Motor Fuel**

When making retail purchases of motor fuel, the carrier must obtain a properly prepared invoice from the retailer. Fuel receipts that do not contain all of the following information may be disallowed as tax-paid credits.

- Date of purchase.
- Seller's name and address.
- Number of gallons purchased.
- Fuel type.
- Fuel tax paid per gallon.
- Price per gallon or total amount of the sale.
- The unit number.
- Purchaser's name.

Retail purchases must be supported by a receipt or invoice, credit card receipt, automated vendor generated invoice or transaction listing, or microfilm/ microfiche image of the receipt or invoice. **Invoices that have been altered or indicate erasures will not be accepted by the Department unless the licensee can demonstrate the receipt is valid.**

### **Electronic Recordkeeping**

On-board recording devices, vehicle tracking systems, or other electronic data recording systems may be used in lieu of or in addition to handwritten trip reports for tax reporting. Any device or electronic system used in conjunction

with a device must meet very specific requirements for data collection. The requirements for electronic recordkeeping can be found in the IFTA Procedures Manual, Sections P600 – P670. The IFTA Procedures Manual is available on the IFTA Inc. Web site, at [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org).

### **Regulated Fuel Types**

The types of fuel regulated under the IFTA vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Michigan currently regulates all fuel types under the IFTA and also collects tax from its licensees for fuel on behalf of other jurisdictions. IFTA carriers must report all miles travelled and fuel purchased in each jurisdiction regardless of whether the jurisdiction collects tax on the fuel type.

The fuel types that are currently regulated under the IFTA are:

A-55	Gasoline
Biodiesel	LNG
Diesel	M-85
E-85	Methanol
Ethanol	Natural Gas (CNG)
Gasohol	Propane (LPG)

Reporting activity accrued using a CNG or LNG power unit requires a conversion rate be applied to determine gallon equivalency. LNG is measured in diesel gallon equivalents of 6.06 pounds of liquefied natural gas. CNG is measured in gasoline gallon equivalents of 5.660 pounds or 126.67 cubic feet of compressed natural gas.

### **Dyed Diesel Fuel**

The Motor Carrier Fuel Tax Act prohibits the use of dyed diesel fuel on public roads with a few exceptions. The exceptions are, in general, governmental vehicles, vehicles used exclusively by the American Red Cross, implements of husbandry and certain buses.

**An implement of husbandry does not include any vehicle registered or required to be registered for highway use, even if the vehicle is used in the farm fields.** All fuel placed in such vehicles is considered taxable and the use of dyed fuel is prohibited.

The Motor Fuel Tax Act provides for a civil penalty of \$1,000 for the first violation of dyed diesel fuel use and \$5,000 for each subsequent violation. These civil penalties are in addition to the cost of the citation and the tax, penalty and interest due on the fuel.

### **Exempt Vehicles**

Michigan exempts from regulation under the Motor Carrier Fuel Tax Act, vehicles owned by this state, a political subdivision of this state, or the federal government; or a qualified motor vehicle owned by, or leased and operated by, a non-profit private, parochial, or denominational, school, college, or university.

Vehicles that are exempt in Michigan may not be exempt in other IFTA jurisdictions. Before traveling into another jurisdiction, carriers should determine whether the vehicles are also exempt in the jurisdictions they will be traveling through. For the purpose of IFTA reporting, the miles travelled and fuel purchased for the exempt vehicle would still be reported but the miles would only be included in the Total Miles for that jurisdiction and not in the Taxable Miles. Information on exempt vehicles for each jurisdiction can be obtained on the IFTA, Inc. Web site at [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org).

### **Buses**

A bus is defined in the Motor Carrier Tax Act as a passenger vehicle of a capacity of 10 or more operating under a certificate of authority issued by the state transportation department or another qualifying agreement.

Bus companies must pay the diesel fuel tax when fuel is purchased either directly into the motor coaches or into bulk storage. Bus companies that purchase and consume fuel in Michigan in a motor coach are eligible for a refund of the diesel fuel tax on that fuel.

Bus companies will report all mileage as taxable on the Michigan IFTA return and take credit for all Michigan tax-paid purchases. In order to calculate any additional refund or tax due, the bus company must complete an IFTA Bus

Schedule (Form 4360). If the net amount calculated on the bus schedule is a credit, a Claim for Refund of Motor Fuel Tax (Form 680) must also be filed. The IFTA schedule filed with the base jurisdiction must also be attached. Refund claim forms can be obtained by calling 517-636-4600.

### **Audits**

The IFTA Articles of Agreement and the IFTA Audit Manual require that a certain number of audits be performed by the Department each year. A motor carrier will be notified of an audit at least 30 days in advance unless there are extenuating circumstances.

All records should be made available to the audit staff at the beginning of the audit in order to expedite the audit. The audit staff will make every effort to keep the motor carrier informed of any adverse findings during the course of the audit.

When the audit is complete, a closing conference will be held to advise the motor carrier of the audit findings and recommendations.

### **Bankruptcy**

If a motor carrier files for bankruptcy, a copy of the order or notice of bankruptcy must be sent to the Michigan Department of Treasury, Collections Division Claims, P.O. Box 30168, Lansing, MI 48909-4222.

## **Payments, Refunds and Appeal Rights**

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### **Payment of Tax**

The IFTA quarterly returns are due on the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. The due dates are as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	April 30 <sup>th</sup>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	July 31 <sup>st</sup>
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	October 31 <sup>st</sup>
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	January 31 <sup>st</sup>

If the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the due date is the next business day. When mailing a check for an electronically

filed IFTA return, the envelope must be metered by or cancelled by the U.S. Postal Service, Canada Post or other delivery service on or before the due date to be considered timely.

### **Penalty and Interest**

Penalty and interest are due on IFTA returns that are filed late. The IFTA Articles of Agreement provide for a late filing penalty of \$50 or 10 percent of the tax due, whichever is greater.

Interest on the IFTA return that's filed late is calculated on a jurisdictional basis and not on the net amount of tax due. It is possible for the interest to exceed the net amount of tax due on a return. The IFTA Articles of Agreement provide for interest to accrue at the following rates:

Effective Date	Monthly Percent (Rate)
7/1/2013	0.42% (0.0042)
1/1/2017	0.50% (0.0050)
1/1/2019	0.58% (0.0058)
1/1/2021	0.42% (0.0042)

### **Late Payment Assessments**

An assessment will be issued on a no remittance or partially paid return and will include penalty and interest. If an adjustment is made to a return, the motor carrier will receive a letter explaining the adjustment and have an opportunity to make payment without penalty. If payment is not made in the time specified in the letter, an assessment will be issued and penalty and interest will accrue.

If a motor carrier fails to file a required IFTA return, delinquent notices will be sent. If a return is still not filed in response to the notices, an estimated assessment will be issued that may result in \$5,000 tax plus penalty and interest.

### **Credits and Refunds**

If an adjustment on a return results in a credit, the credit may be applied to any existing liabilities. If no liabilities exist, the credit will remain available for 8 quarters to be used on future returns, unless a refund is requested by the carrier. Interest on refunds is paid beginning 90 days from the date of the refund request.

### **Appeal Rights**

A motor carrier has 60 days from the date an Intent to Assess is issued to send a written request for an informal conference. If a motor carrier timely requests an informal conference, the Hearings Division of the Michigan Department of Treasury will notify the carrier of the time and place of the informal conference.

If a motor carrier fails to request an informal conference timely, the Department will issue a final assessment to the carrier. If the motor carrier wishes to appeal the final assessment, the motor carrier has 35 days from the date of the final assessment to file an appeal with the Michigan Tax Tribunal or 90 days from the date of the final assessment to file an appeal with the Michigan Court of Claims. The carrier must pay any uncontested portion of the final assessment as a prerequisite to the appeal.

If the Department denies or reduces the amount of a refund request, the motor carrier has 60 days from the date the refund request was denied or reduced to request an informal conference. The motor carrier also has the option of filing an appeal with the Michigan Tax Tribunal within 35 days of the date of the refund denial or reduction, or with the Michigan Court of Claims within 90 days of the date of the refund denial or reduction.

### **Resources**

All IFTA forms can be found on the Treasury website at [www.michigan.gov/ifta](http://www.michigan.gov/ifta)

Correspondence can be mailed to:

Michigan Department of Treasury  
Special Taxes Division – IFTA Unit  
P.O. Box 30474  
Lansing, MI 48909-7974

Documents may also be faxed to (517) 636-4593. Telephone assistance is available from 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday - Friday at (517) 636-4580. Mileage, fuel and vehicle exemption databases, tax rate charts, jurisdictional contact information, updates to the IFTA governing documents and other information are available on the IFTA, Inc. website at [www.iftach.org](http://www.iftach.org).