

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2025

Contact: Zach Cahalan
zcahalan@trucksafety.org
202-921-9526

Truck Driver English Proficiency Supports Safety; Systemic Challenges Remain in CDL Issuance

Washington, DC – The ability to read and understand traffic signs and signals has always been and will remain a crucial factor required of all truck drivers to ensure highway safety. It is also important for all drivers to be able to converse sufficiently with law enforcement officials to support routine CMV enforcement needs during roadside inspections and other situations. The longstanding federal statute requiring this of all truck drivers, 49 CFR §391.11(b)(2), unequivocally supports highway safety. The Truck Safety Coalition is acutely aware of this need **as a significant number of our crash victims and survivors have suffered preventable tragedies caused by poorly trained drivers** who were unable to converse in English, leaving painful, unresolved questions as to their level of understanding of road signs and if they met the necessary qualifications to hold a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

To be clear, a subjective judgment on how well a driver speaks English in a roadside inspection is not the determinative factor in assessing the safety of a truck driver. Respected industry stakeholders, such as the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, have openly questioned the safety impacts of such subjective standards. **In the opinion of TSC, it is the quality of the training, experience of the driver operating Behind the Wheel (BTW) of a large truck, and knowledge of and adherence to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), such as Hours of Service and Vehicle Maintenance, that are far more reliable and predictive indicators of a truck driver's likelihood to drive safely.** The best time to make a thorough and informed assessment of a driver's ability to drive safely is before a CDL is ever issued.

Beyond increased enforcement of 49 CFR §391.11(b)(2), the Trump Administration's Executive Order includes additional measures that begin to address this issue of ensuring CDLs are properly issued in the first place:

- Reviewing non-domiciled CDL's issued by State Agencies to identify unusual patterns or irregularities
- Evaluating and improving protocols for verifying the authenticity and validity of **both domestic and international driving credentials** (emphasis added)

It is an open secret that training schools and associated skills test and knowledge examiners, in the United States and Mexico, function as "pay to play" operations, whereby prospective drivers pay the training fee and are not required to complete Entry Level Driver Training that meets federal compliance standards. **Fraudulent issuance of CDLs compromises the safety of all roadway users and must be meaningfully addressed.** Additionally, there is no required minimum number of BTW hours a prospective driver must drive before obtaining a CDL. This is absurd, unsafe, and produces inadequately trained truck drivers with little to no experience actually driving a large truck. TSC calls on all stakeholders and policymakers to address this critical shortcoming as soon as possible.

###

The Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) is a partnership between Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), also known as The CRASH Foundation, and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.). The Truck Safety Coalition is dedicated to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policymakers, and the media about truck safety issues. Visit our website at <https://trucksafety.org>