

Trucking Terminology and Definitions



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Commerce and Compliance Division

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General Terms

Apportioned Registration

Registration that allows commercial vehicles to comply with registration requirements of more than one jurisdiction and to pay registration fees based on the percentage of operation in those jurisdictions.

Audit

The physical examination of a Registrant's Operational Records, including source documents, to verify:

- Distances reported in the Registrant's application for apportioned registration.
- Accuracy of the Registrant's recordkeeping system for its Fleet.
- Such an examination may be of multiple Fleets for multiple years.

Authority

Authority, or motor carrier authority, is a regulatory term that refers to legal authorization to transport goods or passengers as part of interstate commerce.

Authorized Carrier

An authorized carrier is preapproved by a shipper to transport that organization's goods.

Axle

A rod that connects wheels on opposite sides of the vehicles and supports the weight of the vehicle.

Axle Rating

The amount of weight permitted on an axle or group of axles.

Backhaul

A load that returns the driver to their place of origin.

Base Plate

A semi tractor's license plate issued from the state in which the vehicle is registered.

Base Jurisdiction

A jurisdiction where the registrant has an established place of business, where mileage is accrued by the fleet, and where the operational records of the fleet are maintained or can be made available.

Belly Dump

A dump trailer that unloads its contents through a hopper in the bottom as opposed to raising its bed like a traditional dump truck.

Bill of Lading (BOL)

The official itemized list of the goods you're hauling in a specific shipment.

Binder

An insurance binder, provided by the insurance company, provides short-term proof of pending coverage until policy paperwork is finalized.

Bobtail

A tractor when there is no trailer hooked up.

Bridge Formula

An equation used by state agencies and DOT to determine the maximum allowable weight of commercial vehicles and how far apart the axles must be to carry that weight.

Broker

A broker, or freight broker, acts as a middleman between carriers and shippers.

Bulk Carrier

These carriers transport loose, unpackaged materials such as gravel or scrap metal.

Bulk Freight

Unpackaged material hauled by bulk carriers, such as sand or coal.

Cab Card

A registration card issued for a vehicle of an apportioned fleet which identifies the:

- Specific vehicle for which it was issued.
- Base jurisdiction of the fleet.
- Registered weight of the vehicle in each apportioned jurisdiction.
- Jurisdiction(s) where the vehicle is properly registered.

Cargo

The freight being hauled.

Cargo Insurance

This covers the freight you're hauling in case of loss or damage during transit.

Carrier

A trucking company or owner-operator that transports goods for profit.

Carrier Liability

The maximum amount for which you could be liable if your freight is lost or damaged.

Commercial Drivers License (CDL)

A CDL is required for virtually all trucking jobs.

Certificate of Insurance (COI)

Issued by your insurance company, this is an official document that verifies your policy details.

Combination

At least one tractor and one trailer.

Combined Gross Vehicle Weight (CGVW)

The total weight of a vehicle including its power unit, equipment, freight, trailers, fuel, etc.

Commercial Carrier

A for-hire business that transports people or goods in commercial vehicles on public roads.

Common Carrier

A carrier that provides services to any customer instead of a private carrier that works for just one client.

Compliance Review

An onsite appraisal by an inspector from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) ensures that a carrier follows all regulations.

Conestoga

An open-deck trailer featuring an accordion-like retractable tarping system. Conestogas provide protection from the elements similar to a dry van trailer coupled with the ease of loading/unloading offered by an open-deck.

Container Shipping

Goods are loaded into massive shipping containers and transported by some combination of ships, trains, and trucks.

Customs

The authority in charge of monitoring the flow of goods between countries.

Deadhead

Driving empty with no cargo.

Dedicated Run

A regular route that goes to the same place at the same time.

Dispatcher

This person works for a carrier and is the main point of contact for company drivers.

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The federal agency responsible for trucking across the United States.

Drayage

A short run that is part of a longer trip, such as transporting freight from a rail yard to its receiver a few miles away.

Drop and Hook

Dropping off a trailer without unloading it and picking up a full trailer at the same time.

Dry Van / Dry Box

The common type of trailer used for hauling general freight that has no climate control needs.

Dry Freight

Freight that does not require refrigeration.

Electronic Logging Device (ELD)

The digital device truckers use for tracking data such as drive time, speed, mileage, etc. The US required ELDs in a mandate beginning in 2019.

Endorsements

An add-on to a commercial drivers license allowing drivers to operate special vehicles or haul regulated commodities, such as driving a tanker or hauling hazardous materials.

Enrollment

The Oregon weight-mile tax program operating authority for vehicles over 26,001 pounds.

Excise Tax

Taxes on certain types of goods, from gasoline to tobacco, are due at the time of manufacture rather than sale.

Freight All Kinds (FAK)

Specialized rates where several similar commodities may fall under one classification. Usually only given to very high-volume customers.

Federal Excise Tax (FET)

Excise taxes levied by the U.S. government rather than individual states.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

The department responsible for constructing and maintaining roads, bridges and tunnels.

Flatbed

An open trailer used to transport large items such as lumber or heavy equipment.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)

The department that regulates commercial trucking.

For-Hire Carrier

A company that provides truck transportation of cargo belonging to others and is paid for doing so. There are two types of for-hire carriers, common carriers and contract carriers. A for-hire carrier may be both a common and a contract carrier.

Freight

The universal term describing any items transported by airplane, ship, rail or commercial vehicle.

Freight Forwarder

A freight forwarder takes possession of freight for its customers, providing such services as storage, packing, and shipping.

Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR)

GAWR is the maximum weight allowed on any one axle.

Gross Combined Weight (GCW)

GCW is the maximum weight for your tractor and trailer together.

Glider Kit

Usually a new truck sold without an engine, transmission, driveline and rear differential.

Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW)

The maximum allowable weight of a vehicle set by the manufacturer. This includes chassis, cab, engine, fuel, driver, cargo, etc.

Gooseneck

A light to medium-duty flatbed trailer that has a protruding neck connecting to a fifth wheel, typically mounted on a hot shot truck.

Highway Vehicle Use Tax (HVUT)

A tax levied on commercial trucks to pay for highway maintenance. The federal tax is on vehicles weighing 55,000 pounds or more, but some states have lower weight limits.

Hopper Body

An open-top or tanker-style truck body used primarily for hauling heavy bulk freight such as grain, food products, dry concrete mix, etc.

Hot Shot Truck

Refers to large pickup trucks with fifth-wheels, or medium-sized flatbed trailers, hauling light loads short distances. Under 26k solo, over 26k in combination.

Household Goods Carrier

Commercial carriers like van lines that specialize in hauling household goods for consumers moving to a new home.

International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA)

IFTA is a simplified structure for calculating fuel taxes.

Intermodal Transportation

Shipping that uses multiple types of transportation, such as trains and trucks.

Interstate

A shipment that crosses state lines.

Intrastate

A shipment that is picked up and delivered within a single state.

International Registration Plan (IRP)

The IRP is an agreement between individual states, Canadian provinces, and the District of Columbia to recognize commercial vehicle registrations issued in any participating location.

Jurisdiction

A country or a state, province, territory, possession or federal district of a country.

King Pin

A steel pin that locks a coupled tractor and trailer together.

Lessee

The entity leasing the truck or trailer.

Lessor

The entity that owns the leased equipment.

Liability insurance

A type of insurance that protects the company or individual from covered property damage or bodily injury claims.

Lift Axle or Drop Axle

The axle on a tractor or trailer that can be raised and lowered to distribute weight evenly and/or keep tires from contacting the road.

Line Haul

Driving on a specific schedule, typically going home every night.

Long Haul

Driving long-distance routes that keep you away from home for days or weeks at a time.

Lowboy

A low-deck flatbed trailer used to haul tall equipment.

Less Than Truckload (LTL)

A shipment that does not take up the full truck space. LTL loads are often combined to create a full truckload.

MCS-150 Motor Carrier Identification Report

Required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). It includes important motor carrier information, including the number of miles traveled the previous year, the materials hauled and insurance coverage.

Motor Carrier

A company that provides truck transportation. There are two types of motor carriers, private carriers and for-hire carriers.

Motor Carrier Number (MC Number)

An identifying license granted to carriers by the FMCSA.

Multilane Highway

Route maintained by ODOT with two or more lanes in each travel direction.

Operating Authority

Legal and regulatory permission to transport goods or passengers across state lines.

Over-The-Road (OTR)

OTR is another term for long-haul trucking.

Oversize / Overweight / Over-Dimension Permit

Any vehicle, combination of vehicles or load whose size or weight is not provided for in Oregon laws must have an oversize or overweight permit. Over-dimension permits can be ordered through [ORION](#), our web-based self-service permitting system. ORION provides access to both single trip permits and annual permits.

Owner-Operator

A trucker who operates independently rather than as an employee of a specific carrier.

Permits

A document allowing permission for carriers to transport freight that exceeds standard or legal weight and size limits.

Placard

Diamond-shaped signs that must be displayed in multiple places on vehicles hauling any sort of hazmat like explosives, gasoline, etc.

Point of Origin

The place you pick up the load.

Port of Entry (POE)

Where an international load is processed through U.S. Customs, or an inspection station at a state border.

Power Unit

The tractor portion of a tractor-trailer, which contains the engine.

Private Carrier

Business which operates trucks primarily for the purpose of transporting its own products and raw materials. The principle business activity of a private carrier is not transportation.

Pullout

A location along a highway which may be used to stage an oversize load and allow traffic to pass provided there is sufficient room.

Pup Trailer

A small flatbed or dry van that can be used together to hauling doubles.

Reefer

A refrigerated trailer that can safely transport perishable items.

Semi

Another term for a large commercial truck or tractor trailer.

Shipper

Also known as the consignor, the shipper is the person or company whose goods are being transported.

Single Lane Highway

Route maintained by ODOT with one lane in each travel direction.

Skid

Another term for a pallet that holds freight for being loaded onto a trailer.

Sleeper

The sleeping area of your truck.

Sliding Tandem

Trailer axles that can be moved to allow for proper distribution of weight.

Spread Axle

A trailer containing multiple axles that are spread out from each other, unlike standard trailers. This is most common on reefer and flatbed trailers.

Step-Deck / Drop Deck

An open deck trailer that is commonly used as an alternative to the flatbed trailer when the height of a load is a factor. The trailer is comprised of an upper deck and a lower to the ground rear section. The lower section provides up to an additional 19" of available loaded height, allowing taller pieces to travel within legal height restrictions.

Straight Truck

A one-piece truck with the cargo area attached to the chassis, as opposed to a tractor-trailer combination vehicle.

Surety Bond

A sum of money put up by a bond company to guarantee you fulfill an obligation. If you don't meet your obligation, the bond company will pay and then come after you for repayment. You'll pay a small fee for this.

Tag

Truck license plate.

Tanker

An enclosed trailer used to haul bulk commodities like liquids, gasoline, and oil.

Temporary Enrollment Document (TED)

The Oregon weight-mile tax program issues a TED to motor vehicles over 26,000 pounds before displaying the vehicles permanent base plate.

Temporary Pass (Oregon Highway Use Tax)

A motor carrier operating vehicles in Oregon with a combined weight of more than 26,000 pounds must purchase a temporary pass (fee plus highway use tax) in addition to a commercial trip permit before operation.

Temporary Vehicle Registration (TVR)

CCD may issue a TVR upon request, only when registration requirements have been met and fees paid.

Tractor

A truck designed primarily to pull a semitrailer by means of a fifth wheel mounted over the rear axle.

Tractor Trailer

Tractor and semitrailer combination.

Trip Permit

Temporary registration trip permit issued by a jurisdiction in lieu of apportioned or full registration.

Unified Carrier Registration (UCR)

A simplified registration process for carriers that engage in interstate commerce.

Unladen Weight

The empty weight of a vehicle, also known as tare weight.

Unladen Weight Permit

An Unladen Weight Permit (Formerly Known as a Hunter's Permit) is a permit issued by an owner-operator (lessor) who terminates a lease and has to surrender his apportioned license plate and cab card to the carrier (lessee). This permit enables a vehicle or combination of vehicles to use the highways in all jurisdictions for the purpose of locating a new job.

U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)

A United States federal agency responsible for regulating federal transportation.

Van

The most common trailer type, a van is an enclosed rectangular box that holds freight. The most common type of van is 53 feet long. Also called a "dry van."

Vehicle Identification Number (VIN)

Every motor vehicle and trailer has a unique VIN that identifies it.

Weigh Station

An official facility that weighs your truck and possibly inspects your equipment and logs.

Weigh-In-Motion (WIM)

A way to measure the weight of a vehicle as it rolls through a station, instead of making it come to a complete stop.

Over-Dimension Definitions and Descriptions

More information is available on our [Over-Dimension Operations in Oregon](#) web page.

Certified Flagger

A trained and certified person responsible for controlling traffic either through a work zone or when required to do so for movement of an oversize load. Flaggers must have one of the following:

- A valid Oregon Certified Flagger card.
- A valid Certified Flagger card from the state transportation departments of Montana, Washington or Idaho.
- This is available through an interstate reciprocity agreement.
- The card is valid for three years from the date issued.

District Guidelines

A set of pre-approved pilot vehicle and traffic control requirements for movement of overwidth loads. More information about flagger certification and reciprocity agreements with other states is available on our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) web page.

Height Pole

A flexible device attached to the front of a pilot vehicle. This is used to determine if bridges and other overhead structures have sufficient clearance for passage of an overheight load.

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

The MUTCD describes the National standard for traffic control devices produced by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

Pilot Vehicle

Also referred to as an escort vehicle. A single vehicle of legal size and weight that accompanies an oversize load through a specified area. The pilot vehicle:

- Is equipped with warning signs, lights, etc. (as defined in Division 82).
- Ensures the safety of the traveling public by warning them that an oversize load is either approaching or traveling ahead in the same direction.
- Warns the operator of the oversize load of any hazards on the road ahead.

Route Survey

A detailed assessment of obstacles along a proposed route. This is generally required for loads over 17 feet 0 inches in height. It includes a list of locations with low obstacles, their specific locations and a plan for navigating around them.

Superload

This is a load or combination of load and hauling equipment that exceeds one or more of the following dimensions:

- Over 16 feet wide on the Interstate.
- Over 14 feet wide on any state two-lane highway. This does not include mobiles with a 14 foot box or less and up to a 12 inch eave.
- Over 17 feet high on any highway.
- Mobile with a box width over 14 feet wide and/or overall width greater than 15 feet.
- Overall length greater than 150 feet.

Traffic Control Plan

A detailed description of methods for stopping or controlling traffic along a permitted route. It includes:

- Narrative outline.
- Contact information.
- Necessary equipment.
- Planned pullout locations.
- Details of side roads that will be controlled.
- Overnight parking locations.
- Methods of communication.
- Safety concerns.