



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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US Department of Transportation Calls Illinois' CDL Program One of Best

The Illinois Commercial Driver License (CDL) program under the jurisdiction of Secretary of State Jesse White was credited as one of the best in the nation in the most recent compliance audit performed by the United States Department of Transportation. The CDL program had been the subject of the bribes-for-licenses federal investigation in the previous administration.

Stephen M. Mattioli, Division Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, wrote in a letter accompanying the results of the compliance audit, "We appreciate your dedication and hard work in this crucial area of commercial motor vehicle safety. Our reviewers continue to say that Illinois' CDL program is one of the best in the nation."

White was pleased that the program passed the federal government's review with flying colors. He said improving a CDL program he inherited under a cloud of corruption was a top priority.

"We are pleased to have the federal government's seal of approval and recognition as one of the best programs in the country," White said. "We have implemented more than a dozen new regulations and procedures for testing and training truck drivers. We have raised the bar because it's vital to road safety."

White has installed the new testing machines for truck drivers at 20 regional CDL facilities throughout the state and requires all commercial drivers in Illinois to take their written exams on new automated testing machines that scramble the questions. All drive tests are also administered at the regional CDL facilities as well for better oversight and uniformity.

The new computers randomly select test questions from a pool of 900. A different test with varying questions is generated for each applicant. The computer immediately grades the test and enters the results, removing the human element from the grading process.

"We want to have the most qualified truck drivers of any state in the country," said White. "Our automated testing machines eliminate any opportunity for cheating and ensure that commercial drivers have demonstrated the necessary knowledge to operate a truck."

The new testing procedures are the latest step White has taken to ensure all truck drivers in Illinois are held to the highest standard for testing and training.

Other reforms White has made to the CDL program include:

- • Requiring commercial drivers from out-of-state to pass the Illinois Commercial Drivers License (CDL) test prior to licensure.
- • Enacting a three-fail rule, which ends the policy that allowed unqualified drivers infinite chances to pass the CDL test.
- • Ensuring that CDL applicants have the necessary reading comprehension skills to do their job safely by prohibiting assistance in reading CDL applications or tests in drivers license facilities.
- • Ensuring that an applicant pass all relevant written tests in order to be licensed to drive a combination vehicle. Prior to this change, a person could receive a permit to drive a basic 18-wheel semi even though they failed the written test that covered the operation of those combination vehicles.
- • Discontinuing the process whereby applicants continually renew learning permits for CDL's as a way to continue driving legally while avoiding the rigors of the actual CDL test. Under the new regulations, a CDL permit will be valid for no more than one year without complete retest.
- • Regularly changing both questions and the word order of the answers on the CDL test.
- • Installing automated testing machines in facilities to replace written CDL tests.
- • Requiring commercial driver license applicants to hold a valid instruction permit for a period of two weeks prior to being skills tested and certified by a third party.
- • Requiring commercial driver license applicants to obtain from the Secretary of State an instruction permit for the specific vehicle classification in which they intend to be licensed – and requiring that the applicant produce the instruction permit before the skills test and certification by a third party entity.
- • Requiring a minimum training period for commercial drivers who receive certification through a third party entity.
- • Requiring third party entities to notify the Secretary of State's office of a driver's termination of employment if the driver's employment lasted for less than six months.
- • Requiring third party testing entities to maintain a rating issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation of at least satisfactory or conditional. Any third party entity that has received an unsatisfactory rating from U.S. Department of Transportation shall be prohibited from conducting third party testing pending a subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation rating of satisfactory or conditional.

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