

What's this job all about?

Heavy truck drivers drive large trucks or tractor-trailers to transport goods and materials. They have to park their trucks or trailers so they can be loaded easily. This may require following hand signals from coworkers who direct them to the proper location. Once trucks are in the proper spot, drivers load items. They may help wrap large items before they are loaded, or cover the entire load if it is on a flatbed. Truck drivers secure some items with straps, ropes, or chains. Once trucks are loaded, drivers carefully inspect them to insure that they can be driven safely.

On the road, drivers concentrate on their driving and on other drivers in order to prevent accidents. In Alaska, being a heavy truck or tractor-trailer driver can involve long hauls on lonely roads and sometimes dangerous roads. Alaska's winter driving conditions can be hazardous, and driving through mountain passes with a big rig requires skill and caution. If you're interested in this job, you should consider that you might not be spending every night sleeping in your own bed at home as these drivers often have responsibility for long hauls.

Here's what Heavy Truck Drivers and Tractor-Trailer Drivers do:

- Use two-way radios to contact their supervisors and give updates on their position.
- Keep their trucks filled with gasoline, oil, and other fluids.
- Keep several types of records and fill out forms to prove that goods were picked up and delivered and are being driven safely.
- Keep logs of what items they delivered, how much the items weighed, and when deliveries were made.
- Spend most of their time driving and away from home.
- Could work days, evenings and weekends.

How much money can I make?

Median Wage: \$20.81.

In Alaska, the median wage for heavy truck drivers is \$3,607 per month (\$20.81 per hour). Half of all heavy truck drivers earn between \$3,065 and \$4,304 per month (\$17.68 and \$24.83 per hour). Nationally, the median wage for heavy truck drivers is \$2,857 per month (\$16.48 per hour). Half of all heavy truck drivers earn between \$2,250 and \$3,562 per month (\$12.98 and \$20.55 per hour). Heavy truck drivers who transport goods across long distances are typically paid by the mile. The rate per mile varies greatly, depending on the employer and the type of cargo. Those who drive larger trucks typically earn higher wages. Heavy truck drivers who work full time often receive benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, and paid vacation. Truck drivers who are self-employed must provide their own insurance.

How long does it take to receive training?

To work as a heavy truck driver, you must have a high school diploma or GED, be at least 18 years old (for in-state driving) or 21 years old (for driving across state borders), be in good health, and have a commercial driver's license (CDL). Most new drivers learn through formal programs. Many private and public vocational schools offer tractor-trailer driver training programs. These programs typically award a certificate or

HELPFUL HIGH SCHOOL COURSES

A high school degree is almost always required to work as a heavy truck driver or tractor-trailer driver. You should take courses in high school that prepare you to earn a high school diploma. Here is a list of high school courses that will help prepare you. Some of these courses are also available at the technical or college level.

Business

- Keyboarding/Word Processing
- Recordkeeping
- Accounting
- Introduction to Business
- Business Management

Computer and Information Sciences

- Basic Computer
- General Computer Applications

Energy, Power, and Transportation Technologies

- Introduction to Mechanics
- Diesel Mechanics and Repair

English Language and Literature

- English and Language Arts
- English Grammar

Health and Safety Education

- Safety and First Aid
- Drivers' Education

Mathematics

- General Math/Consumer Math
- Applied Math
- Business Math

Physical Education

- Fitness and Conditioning Activities
- Weight Training
- Lifetime Fitness Education

Social Sciences and History

- Geography
- Business Law

Since many heavy truck drivers are self-employed, you may find it useful to take business management, accounting, and computer courses.

diploma and last less than one year. Completing these programs should help you get a job as a trainee. This often is a requirement for a commercial driver's license. These programs usually take a few months to complete. The Teamsters' Union has an apprenticeship program that requires a minimum of 2400 hours of on-the-job training and classroom training. Apprentices earn while they learn. Operating equipment or driving light trucks is good background for this occupation. Some drivers begin as assistants. They drive part of the time and help the driver load and unload cargo. Once hired, you usually work with an experienced driver for a short time. You may receive training in special cargo, such as hazardous materials. Military experience driving heavy trucks is good background for this occupation.

When I'm ready to work, will there be job openings?

In Alaska, the outlook for job openings for heavy truck drivers is excellent to 2014. Average growth is projected due to growth in the occupation. If a gas pipeline is built there will be a heavy demand for drivers. Nationally, the number of jobs for heavy truck drivers is expected to grow as fast as average through the year 2014. The growth of the economy and the amount of freight that needs to be transported determine the demand for drivers. When the economy is strong, people buy more and truck drivers are needed to transport products. Many openings will occur as experienced drivers move to other fields of work or retire. However, competition will be strong for the jobs with the best wages and working conditions.

Please see the Training Programs section of this booklet to find out more about training in these career fields in Alaska.

