

FLEET SAFETY & COMPLIANCE

The Working Checklist

A practical, print-friendly reference for Driver Qualification Files, Hours of Service & ELD compliance, and ongoing safety program management — built from the same standards our auditors use in the field.

Section 1 — Driver Qualification File (DQF) Checklist

Every document FMCSA expects to find in a compliant driver file.

Section 2 — Hours of Service & ELD Checklist

The daily and periodic checks that keep your logs audit-ready.

Section 3 — Ongoing Safety Program Checklist

Drug & alcohol, CSA monitoring, and vehicle files — the recurring work.

How to use this guide

Print each section separately per driver or per truck, or keep a running digital copy. None of this replaces a professional audit — it's the baseline we check first when we start one.

SECTION 1

Driver Qualification File Checklist

Per 49 CFR §391.51, every driver file should contain the following. Missing even one of these is one of the most common findings in a Compliance Review.

- ☐ **Driver's employment application**
Completed per §391.21, covering the required 3-year (or 10-year for certain violations) work history.
- ☐ **Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) — pre-employment**
Pulled from every state where the driver held a license in the past 3 years (§391.23).
- ☐ **Annual MVR review**
A new MVR pulled and reviewed at least once every 12 months (§391.25), signed and dated by the reviewer.
- ☐ **Annual driver's certification of violations**
Signed statement listing traffic violations from the past 12 months, or certifying none (§391.27).
- ☐ **Road test certificate or CDL equivalent**
Either a completed road test (§391.31) or a valid CDL used to waive the test.
- ☐ **Medical examiner's certificate**
Current DOT medical card, cross-checked against the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners.
- ☐ **Previous employer safety performance history**
Records requested from DOT-regulated employers for the past 3 years, including drug/alcohol test results (§391.23(d)).
- ☐ **Pre-employment Clearinghouse query**
Full query completed and documented before the driver operates a CMV.
- ☐ **Annual Clearinghouse query**
Limited query completed and on file for every current driver, once every 12 months.
- ☐ **Driver's license verification**
Copy of current, valid CDL on file, with class and endorsements matching the vehicles operated.

Field note

The single most common DQF gap we find isn't a missing document — it's a stale one. An MVR or Clearinghouse query that's 13 months old instead of 12 fails just as hard as one that's missing entirely.

SECTION 2

Hours of Service & ELD Checklist

Core limits under 49 CFR Part 395, plus the ELD housekeeping that keeps those logs defensible at the roadside and in an audit.

Daily driving limits

- ☐ **11-hour driving limit**
No more than 11 hours of driving after 10 consecutive hours off duty.
- ☐ **14-hour on-duty window**
Driving isn't allowed after the 14th consecutive hour since coming on duty.
- ☐ **30-minute break rule**
Required after 8 cumulative hours of driving time (on-duty non-driving time satisfies this).
- ☐ **60/70-hour limit**
60 hours in 7 days, or 70 hours in 8 days, depending on your operation's schedule.
- ☐ **34-hour restart**
Used correctly to reset the weekly clock — confirm it's a full 34 consecutive hours off duty.

ELD device & recordkeeping

- ☐ **ELD is on FMCSA's registered device list**
Check the list regularly — devices can be, and have been, removed after the fact.
- ☐ **Drivers trained on ELD use and malfunction procedure**
Including how to revert to paper logs during a malfunction without a violation.
- ☐ **Malfunction and diagnostic events resolved**
Any open ELD malfunction event addressed and documented within 8 days.
- ☐ **Supporting documents retained**
Fuel receipts, dispatch records, and toll records kept for 6 months to back up logged data.
- ☐ **Unassigned driving time reviewed**
Checked and assigned or annotated regularly, not left to accumulate unexplained.

SECTION 3

Ongoing Safety Program Checklist

The recurring, calendar-driven tasks that keep a safety program compliant between audits — the things that are easy to let slip once the initial paperwork is done.

Drug & alcohol program

- ☐ **Random testing pool enrollment current**
Drivers enrolled in a compliant random selection pool at the required testing rate.
- ☐ **Designated Employer Representative (DER) assigned**
A trained DER on file who can receive test results and remove drivers from duty if required.
- ☐ **Reasonable-suspicion training documented**
Supervisors trained per §382.603, with certificates on file.
- ☐ **Return-to-duty and follow-up testing tracked**
For any driver who has completed the SAP process.

CSA & vehicle files

- ☐ **CSA BASIC scores reviewed monthly**
Checked against intervention thresholds, with a corrective plan for anything trending up.
- ☐ **Annual vehicle inspections current**
Valid inspection sticker/report on file for every unit, per §396.17.
- ☐ **DVIRs reviewed and defects closed out**
Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports reviewed daily, with defects repaired and signed off before dispatch.
- ☐ **Preventive maintenance records up to date**
A documented PM schedule followed and logged per vehicle.

Where most fleets slip

DQFs and HOS logs get attention because they're checked constantly. The drug & alcohol program and vehicle files are the ones that quietly go stale — they're exactly what we check first in a mock audit.

Want a second set of eyes on all of this? IFTAX LLC runs full compliance audits with a 48-hour turnaround — reach out at info@iftax.org or visit iftax.org to schedule a free review.