

ONLY ONE DRIVER'S LICENSE

Uncle Sam Lays Down A Tough New Standard

Growing concerns about highway safety have led the federal government to crack down on drivers with bad records.

One result was the federal government's adoption of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1986, which makes it mandatory that every driver have a single commercial license meeting certain uniform standards. As a professional, you should know what this new law says and be sure that you're meeting its requirements.

No More Multiple Licenses

Congress passed the new law after it became apparent that many drivers were carrying multiple licenses issued by different states. It wasn't legal under state laws, but drivers--especially those with something to hide--found ways to avoid turning in their old licenses when they applied for new ones.

The practice made it hard for authorities to weed out drivers with bad histories, since their violations couldn't be spotted in a single computer search. It sometimes meant that a driver who deserved to have his license suspended for repeat violations remained on the road until someone got hurt.

The Commercial License Program

The new law requires that every driver carry a single Commercial Driver's License and have a single driving record maintained in one state. Since July 1, 1987, it has been a violation of federal law for any commercial driver to carry more than one license.

This applies to all commercial drivers--even those whose jobs never require them to go outside of their home state.

There's still no such thing as a national driver's license. But the new law requires states to conform to tough new standards so that all licenses will be uniform in their requirements.

Stricter New Standards

As of mid-1988, the Department of Transportation set standards for minimum passing scores in written and driving tests as well as standard for medical certification. By April 1, 1992, every commercial driver will be required to carry a Commercial Driver's License which meets these standards.

In applying for a license, drivers must tell the new state, as well as their employers, of any violations they've had in other states. They must also tell prospective employers their driving history for the previous 10 years and can be fined or imprisoned if they fail to do so. So can employers who hire drivers without requiring this history.

A driver can have his commercial license revoked for a year if he's convicted of driving a commercial vehicle under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. He may be banned from driving for three years if he was transporting hazardous materials at the time.

On a subsequent conviction, he may be disqualified for life.

The law also requires that each state be in compliance with the program by October

1993 or risk losing 5 percent of its federal highway construction funds.

The CDL Information System

One of the chief aims of the 1986 law was to create a nationwide computer network which will serve as a clearinghouse and source of quick information on the records of all commercial drivers. The network, called the Commercial Driver's License Information System or CDLIS, went on line in 1989.

When fully operational, it will tie together all 50 states and the District of Columbia, providing information to employers, states, the DOT and drivers themselves.

Know and follow these strict new federal regulations. You'll be helping to make the highways a safer place for everyone.

