Driver Qualification (DQ) File Checklist

A one-driver checklist for the driver qualification file required by 49 CFR 391.51, with the annual review, retention rules and drug and alcohol records.

Last reviewed October 26, 2026. Free to print and share.

Driver

Driver name _____

License number and state _____

CDL class and endorsements _____

Hire date _____

Medical certificate expiry date _____

What must be in the file (49 CFR 391.51)

- [ ] Employment application (49 CFR 391.21).
- [ ] Motor vehicle record from each state where the driver held a license in the past three years (49 CFR 391.23).
- [ ] Road test certificate, or an accepted equivalent such as a copy of a valid CDL.
- [ ] Annual MVR and a note of the annual review (who reviewed it and when).
- [ ] Medical examiner's certificate (for CDL holders, medical status now comes from the CDLIS driving record).
- [ ] Skill performance evaluation certificate or medical exemption, if the driver has one.
- [ ] For non-CDL drivers: note confirming the medical examiner is on the National Registry.

Drug and alcohol records (kept alongside the DQ file)

- [ ] Pre-employment negative drug test result (CDL drivers).
- [ ] Full pre-employment Clearinghouse query and driver consent.
- [ ] Annual Clearinghouse query.
- [ ] Previous employer drug and alcohol history inquiry.

Annual review log

Year	MVR date	Reviewed by	Clearinghouse query date	Med cert expiry

Keep the file while the driver works for you and for three years after they leave.

Resources

Read the full guide: Driver Qualification File Checklist (guide) (https://opentruckingcompany.com/guides/driver-qualification-file-checklist)

FREE DOWNLOADS

- New Entrant safety audit checklist (PDF) – Everything else the auditor asks for.
  https://opentruckingcompany.com/downloads/new-entrant-safety-audit-checklist.pdf

OFFICIAL FORMS AND LOOKUPS

- eCFR: 49 CFR 391.51 (driver qualification files) – The rule that lists what goes in the file.
  https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/part-391/section-391.51
- eCFR: 49 CFR 391.25 (annual review) – The annual driving record inquiry and review.
  https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/part-391/section-391.25
- National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners – Find or verify a DOT medical examiner.
  https://nationalregistry.fmcsa.dot.gov/
- FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse – Run pre-employment and annual queries.
  https://clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/

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