



DOT Background Screening Requirements: Employer Resource Guide

A practical guide to help employers understand Department of Transportation (DOT) background screening requirements across all six modal agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard.

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Who these DOT screening requirements apply to:

Employers subject to DOT regulations must complete certain screenings before performing safety-sensitive functions.

→ Covered Employers

Transportation employers covered by DOT modal agency rules requiring background screening for specific workers.

→ Safety-Sensitive Employees

Employees whose duties could directly affect transportation safety, security, or public trust.

→ Service Agents

While third-party providers can assist with background screening, the employer is ultimately accountable for compliance.

 Use the "**Am I Covered?**" tool at [transportation.gov/odapc](https://www.transportation.gov/odapc) to confirm your coverage obligation.

Each DOT Agency has different background screening requirements.


 Use the Table of Contents below to navigate to your agency's requirements.

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Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)

Covers Commercial Drivers License (CDL) and Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) holders operating commercial motor vehicles in interstate commerce. FMCSA-regulated employers must comply with both **Part 49** and [Part 382](#).

Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse Query

Pre-Employment:

full query required *before* first safety-sensitive duty.

Annual:

limited query required for all *current drivers*.

Motor Vehicle Record (MVR)

Pre-Employment & Annual:

minimum 3 years of driving history *at hire*; must be reviewed *annually thereafter*.

DOT Employment Verification

Pre-Employment:

3 years of prior safety-sensitive employment history, including accident and safety performance records, required *before* hire.

DOT Physical Exam

Pre-Employment & Renewal:

medical certification required before hire and must remain current (renewed per medical examiner's schedule).

- Best Practice Additions:** PSP (Pre-Employment Screening Program) for crash/inspection history; Commercial Drivers License Information System (CDLIS) check for all CDLs held across states; county/state criminal searches.



Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)

Covers operators of natural gas pipelines ([Part 192](#)), Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facilities ([Part 193](#)), and hazardous liquid/CO₂ pipelines ([Part 195](#)). Requirements apply to employees, contractors, and subcontractors performing covered functions.

Drug & Alcohol History Check


Pre-Employment:

Required before beginning safety-sensitive duties. Employers must request records covering the previous *2 years*.

State MVR Check

Pre-Employment: A

state Motor Vehicle Record Check is required for employees who operate vehicles as part of their covered pipeline functions. Employers must verify the employee's driving history *before* assignment to any role requiring vehicle operation on regulated pipeline or LNG facility sites.


 **HAZMAT Only:** A **criminal history check** is required specifically for employees performing **hazardous materials functions**. This check is conducted *pre-employment*, before the employee begins any covered hazmat duties.

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Covers pilots, mechanics, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, ground security coordinators, and others performing safety-sensitive aviation functions under [14 CFR Part 120](#).

Drug & Alcohol History Check

Pre-Employment: Required *before* beginning safety-sensitive duties. Employers must request records covering the previous **5 years for pilot** positions and **2 years for all other safety-sensitive** positions.

 Different FAA safety-sensitive roles have **specific, role-dependent** screening requirements, but the DOT Drug & Alcohol Testing History Check ([49 CFR §40.25](#)) is the only screening requirement universally applicable across all covered positions.



Federal Transportation Administration (FTA)

Covers revenue service vehicle operators, dispatchers, vehicle maintenance staff, and armed security personnel at FTA-funded transit agencies.

Drug & Alcohol History Check

Pre-Employment: Required *before* beginning safety-sensitive duties. Employers must request records covering the previous **2 years**.

⚠ Requirements vary based on the role, with safety-sensitive positions subject to stricter screening under federal regulations, while other roles follow standard federal employment background checks. These requirements are defined across multiple DOT and FTA regulations rather than a single consolidated source.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

Covers train and engine service workers, dispatchers, signal employees, roadway workers, and mechanical employees performing regulated inspections and tests under [49 CFR Part 219](#).

Drug & Alcohol History Check

Pre-Employment: Required *before* beginning safety-sensitive duties. Employers must request records covering the previous **2 years**.

⚠ Requirements vary by role, with safety-sensitive positions subject to consistent federal drug and alcohol testing rules, while other roles follow less standardized screening.



United States Coast Guard (USCG)

Covers credentialed mariners and others performing safety-sensitive functions aboard regulated vessels. Although the U.S. Coast Guard is now under the Department of Homeland Security, its background check requirements remain aligned with DOT standards.

Drug & Alcohol History Check


Pre-Employment: Required *before* beginning safety-sensitive duties. Employers must request records covering the previous **2 years**.

⚠ Requirements vary by role, with security- and access-sensitive positions requiring stricter federal screening (such as security clearances or TWIC checks), while other roles follow standard federal hiring background checks.

Background Screening Requirements at a Glance

Summary of key background screening requirements across the six DOT modal agencies. All agencies also require written employee consent before any background investigation begins.

Agency	Key Background Checks Required
FMCSA	Clearinghouse query, MVR (3 yrs), employment verification (3 yrs), DOT physical
FAA	Drug & Alcohol History Check
FTA	Drug & Alcohol History Check
FRA	Drug & Alcohol History Check
PHMSA	Drug & Alcohol History Check, MVR
USCG	Drug & Alcohol History Check

 Written employee consent is required before any background investigation begins. Verify agency-specific procedures and any additional state or employer requirements before hiring or assignment.

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