

Everything Truckers Need to Know About REAL ID and Upcoming License Deadlines





There are several forms of identification available to professional drivers, depending on the circumstances and level of security required. Yes, you need that CDL, but you may want and need more, due to new federal requirements.

9/11 And The REAL ID Requirements

On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by al-Qaeda terrorists who had taken advantage of weaknesses in state driver license procedures to obtain phony documents, register for pilot training and hijack four commercial airline flights, using the false identities. The result was two of the hijacked flights crashing into the World Trade Center in New York City, causing the collapse of its Twin Towers, a third flight hitting the Pentagon near DC, destroying its west side, and the downing of the fourth hijacked plane near Shanksville, PA, after passengers rose up against the terrorists. The attacks directly killed 2,996 people and injured 6,000 others. 9/11 is the single deadliest terrorist attack in human history.

The [9/11 Commission](#), formally known as The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, investigated the attacks and recommended that the federal government “set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver’s licenses.” In 2005 Congress passed the REAL ID Act, setting those standards. The REAL ID standards are intended to help verify identification and guard against the forgery of licenses.

Initial enforcement of the REAL ID Act for boarding commercial aircraft began in January 2018, but several states and U.S. territories received extensions to come into full compliance. As of October 1, 2021, extended by a year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, every state and territory resident 18 years of age or older will need to present a REAL ID compliant license/ID, or another acceptable form of identification, for these specific purposes: accessing secure federal facilities (including military installations), entering nuclear power plants, and boarding commercial aircraft.

What Is The REAL ID?

Contrary to popular mythology, the REAL ID is not a mandate on citizens or on the states themselves. Nor is there a federal database maintained of REAL ID licensees. Rather, it is a requirement on federal agencies, restricting the circumstances under which they may accept state-issued driver’s licenses and identification cards for official purposes. “Official purposes” means the conduct of business. You won’t need a REAL ID-compliant license, for example, to tour a Smithsonian museum or simply drive on the highway. But it will be requested to clear security at a federal agency building or facility, as well as to access nuclear facilities and board commercial aircraft when using your driver’s license for identification.

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Currently, there are two of the 56 states and territories – Oregon and Oklahoma – which have extensions. Both are expected to be in compliance by the October 1, 2021 deadline. Some states which issued REAL IDs improperly, including Maryland and California, are in the process of redoing them. [Click here](#) to check on the status of your state or territory.

How do you recognize a REAL ID-compliant license? An easy way to know your card is not compliant is if it says “Not for Federal Identification” or “Federal Limits Apply.”

If you renewed your driver’s license online, it’s not REAL ID-compliant – it requires an in-person visit to the agency to provide the documentation needed for REAL ID. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is examining ways to apply online for a REAL ID, but no official standards have been announced. Until state driver licensing agencies have received the DHS standards and are prepared to handle online REAL ID applications, a personal visit is required.

Be certain; states issue both REAL ID-compliant and standard driver’s licenses. Most REAL ID licenses have a gold or black star in the upper right corner. But to add confusion, Hawaii, Ohio, Tennessee and Utah have issued compliant licenses without the star, while other states have incorporated stars in non-compliant licenses. If you aren’t sure you have one, check with your state driver’s licensing agency.

While October 2021 may seem to be far away, states are very busy coming into REAL ID compliance, so plan now for that appointment with your home state driver’s licensing agency. The documents you will need include:

- Proof of identity and date of birth and of legal presence in the United States
- Proof of Social Security number
- Two proofs of residency in the state

There are numerous documents which can satisfy these requirements; check your state driver's licensing agency for a list of acceptable documents. But all must be original or certified copies, not images on a smart phone or uncertified copies.

The REAL ID Act applies only to the acceptance by federal agencies of state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards for the above purposes. Each federal agency may establish other acceptable forms of identification. For example, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) lists [these accepted documents for boarding aircraft](#).

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Depending On Where You're Heading A REAL ID May Not Be Enough

Enhanced driver's license - Truck drivers crossing international borders into the U.S. from Canada or Mexico have another alternative form of identification, the Enhanced Driver's License (EDL). EDLs also allow entry into the U.S. by sea from participating Caribbean countries. Created as part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), EDLs make it easier for U.S. citizens to cross the border into the United States because EDLs include:

- A vicinity Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip that will signal a secure system to pull up biographic and biometric data for the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer as drivers approach the border inspection booth, and
- A Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) or barcode that the CBP officer can read electronically if RFID isn't available.

EDLs are REAL ID-compliant. But they require additional documentation that REAL IDs do not, such as proof of U.S. citizenship, proof of photographic identity and an interview questionnaire at the time of application.

The top 39 land ports of entry, which process more than 95 percent of land border crossings, are equipped with RFID technology that helps facilitate travel by individuals presenting EDLs or one of the other RFID-enabled documents. Currently, the states of Washington, Minnesota, Michigan, New York and Vermont issue EDLs to their resident U.S. citizens. The Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec issue EDLs to Canadian citizens.



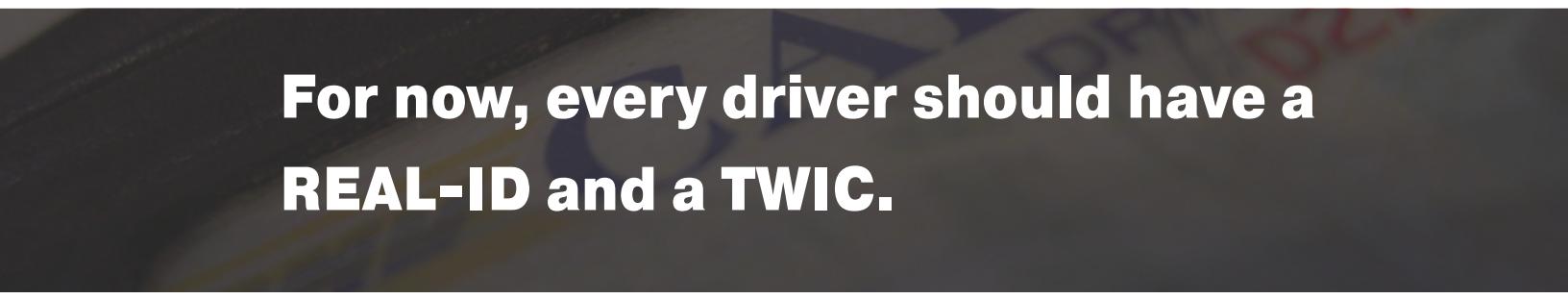
Current TWIC cards remain valid until their expiration date.

Transportation Worker Identification Credential - The Transportation Worker Identification Credential, also known as a “TWIC card”, is required by the Maritime Transportation Security Act for workers who need access to secure areas of the nation’s maritime facilities and vessels. First issued in 2007, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) now issues a TWIC NexGen card, which incorporates more security features. Current TWIC cards remain valid until their expiration date.

Yes, TSA will recognize a valid TWIC card for boarding a commercial aircraft. But the TWIC’s purpose is maritime security, so, unlike the REAL ID, applying for the TWIC requires fingerprinting and a background check, as well as a

facial photo. There are disqualifying criminal offenses and other factors. Put simply, the REAL ID is verified identification and a driver's license but not background check security; the TWIC is maritime identification and security – but is not a driver's license.

Unlike the EDL, a lawful permanent resident, naturalized citizen or a nonimmigrant alien, asylee, or refugee who is in lawful status, as well as a U.S. citizen, may apply for a TWIC. The TWIC application can be done online or in person.



For now, every driver should have a REAL-ID and a TWIC.

Access to Military Bases/Facilities - Access requirements to military facilities are very challenging and inconsistent. According to Bill Wanamaker, executive director of the Government Freight Conference of the American Trucking Associations (ATA), carriers who conduct major activity at these facilities know the ropes. They are Department of Defense-approved carriers and in the facility databases. Such carriers also have access to the Transportation Facility Guide (TFG), which contains installation-specific access information, and to the Carrier Appointment System (CAS).

However, always check ahead when delivering to or picking up from a U.S. military facility. The military facility wants to know you have a legitimate purpose to be on its grounds, including specifics about the load and proper identification of the commercial motor vehicle and its drivers or drivers. Military facilities adjust those requirements to fit the circumstances – don't assume what worked last time will work again. Similarly, don't assume the

information in the TFG and CAS is up to date. To give you the best odds of a smooth entry, your dispatcher should contact the transportation officer (TO) for that installation and then hope the TO and guards communicate.

As for credentials, Wanamaker advises that, at some time in the future, any driver with a REAL-ID will have all they need to enter. For now, though, every driver should have a REAL-ID and a TWIC. For a few installations hosting nuclear operations or other top security requirements, you need to prove American citizenship and the best instrument for that is a passport. Be prepared with your REAL ID-compliant state driver's license (or your EDL), but ask in advance what else is required.

"Keep notes for every installation including names, titles, phone numbers and emails. You may need this to enter now and in the future -- as well as to get paid," Wanamaker said. "If installation personnel request additional services for which you apply an assessorial charge, make them annotate the bill of lading or you will not get paid for it."

Today's professional driver works in a world where verified identification and background check security are increasingly required. A REAL ID-compliant driver's license or an EDL, coupled with a TWIC and the knowledge and patience to meet government security requirements, are now tools of the trade for those crossing international borders or accessing government and military facilities.