

Understanding the Local Labor Market

Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

Focus: Truck Drivers

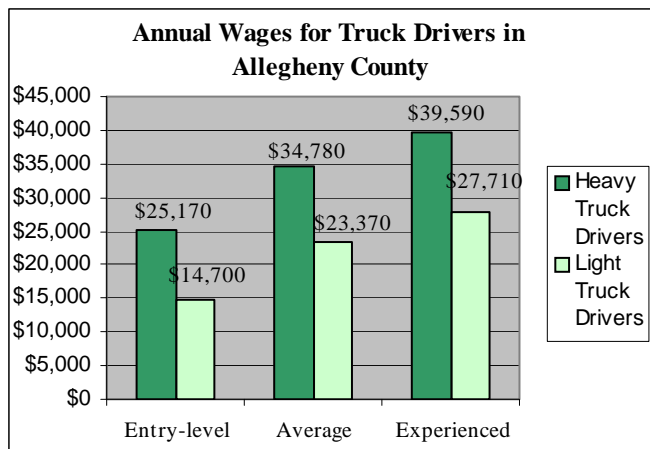
Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County is a useful resource for career counselors and other professionals responsible for helping jobseekers make informed decisions about employment and training. Featured occupations are selected on the basis of vacancies, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

What do truck drivers do?

- Truck drivers are a constant presence on the highway, delivering everything from automobiles to canned food. Firms of all kinds rely on trucks to pick up and deliver goods because no other form of transportation can deliver goods door-to-door.
- Before leaving the terminal or warehouse, truck drivers check the fuel level and oil in their trucks. They also inspect the trucks to make sure that the brakes, windshield wipers and lights are working and that a fire extinguisher, flares, and other safety equipment are aboard and in working order.
- Truck drivers are usually categorized as either *heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers* or *light or delivery services truck drivers*.
- *Heavy truck and tractor-trailer drivers* operate trucks with a capacity of over 26,000 pounds Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW). Many routes are from city to city and cover long distances.
- *Light or delivery services truck drivers* pick up or deliver merchandise and packages within a specific area. Local truck drivers may have sales and customer service responsibilities.

What are wages, benefits, and work conditions for truck drivers?

- The US Department of Transportation governs work hours and working conditions of drivers engaged in interstate commerce. A driver may not drive after having worked for 60 hours in the past 7 days or 70 hours in the past 8 days unless they have at least 34 consecutive hours off-duty. Local truck drivers usually work 50 or more hours per week, but return home each day.
- Drivers travel nights, holidays, and weekends to avoid traffic. The average annual wage for a heavy truck driver is \$34,780 and for a light truck driver it is \$23,370.



Source: PA Dept. of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis (www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/)

What do truck drivers like about their jobs?

- Truck drivers enjoy night driving as it is commonplace for long-distance truckers to begin at night in order to avoid traffic.
- Local truck drivers like physical activity as this job requires considerable amounts of lifting, carrying, and walking each day.
- Truck drivers enjoy the peacefulness of a long-distance drive.

What are advancement opportunities and related occupations?

- The advancement of truck drivers is generally limited to driving runs that provide increased earnings, preferred schedules, or working conditions.
- Local truck drivers may advance to driving heavy or specialized trucks, or transfer to long-distance truck driving. Working for companies that also employ long-distance drivers is the best way to advance to these positions. Few truck drivers become dispatchers or managers.
- Some long distance truck drivers purchase trucks and go into business for themselves. Owner-operators should have a good business sense as well as truck driving experience. Courses in accounting, business, and business administration are helpful. Knowledge of truck mechanics can enable owner-operators to perform their own routine maintenance and minor repairs.
- Other driving occupations include ambulance drivers and attendants; bus drivers; and taxi drivers and chauffeurs.

How many openings are there for truck drivers?

- The PA Department of Labor and Industry estimates that there are approximately 6,160 *heavy truck drivers* and 5,880 *light truck drivers* in Allegheny County.
- The number of *heavy truck drivers* in Allegheny County is expected to increase through 2012, when there are projected to be 6,380 jobs. For *light truck drivers*, the number of jobs is expected to decrease slightly to 5,840.
- The PA Department of Labor and Industry projects an estimated 123 job openings per year for *heavy truck drivers*, and 50 for *light truck drivers*.
- 86 employers posted local truck driving jobs on the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink website (www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com) between January 2007 and March 2007. Most employers have multiple openings for truck drivers.

How can I become a truck driver?

- State and federal regulations govern the qualifications and standards for truck drivers. All drivers must comply with federal regulations and any state regulations that are in excess of those federal requirements. Truck drivers must have a driver's license issued by the state in which they live, and most employers require a clean driving record. Heavy truck drivers must obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) from the state in which they live. The CDL is also required to operate certain pieces of construction equipment and to drive a bus.
- To qualify for a CDL an applicant must have a clean driving record, pass a written test on rules and regulations, and then demonstrate that they can operate a commercial truck safely.
- Many states allow those who are as young as 18 years old to drive trucks within their borders. To drive a commercial vehicle between states one must be 21 years of age, according to the US Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), which establishes minimum qualifications for truck drivers engaged in interstate commerce.
- The U.S. DOT requires drivers to be at least 21 years old and to pass a physical examination once every two years. The main physical requirements include good hearing, at least 20/40 vision with glasses or corrective lenses and a 70-degree field of vision in each eye. Drivers can not be colorblind.
- Many trucking firms require that drivers be at least 22 years old, be able to lift heavy objects, and have driven trucks for 3 to 5 years. Most employers prefer to hire high school graduates and require annual physical examinations. Companies have economic incentives to hire less risky drivers, as good drivers use less fuel and cost less to insure.

How do I find out about truck driver jobs?

- **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink** has job postings for these positions (contact 1-866-317-JOBS or visit www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com to learn more).
- **American Trucking Associations** — www.trucking.org, has information on career opportunities in trucking.

Where can I get training locally?

- Training given to new drivers by employers is usually informal, and may consist of only a few hours of instruction from an experienced driver, sometimes on the new employee's own time.
- New drivers may also ride with and observe experienced drivers before getting their own assignments.
- **All State Career School** — www.allstatecareer.edu, 412-823-1818. Provides driver training programs in trucking.
- **International Brotherhood of Teamsters** — www.teamster.org, 202-624-6800. Provides information on the labor union and careers in trucking.
- **Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics** — www.pia.edu, 412-346-2100. Provides driver training programs in trucking.

Can I get help paying for training?

- Limited training funds may be available through Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink.
- Training funds may be available for people with disabilities through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Remember...

Labor markets are affected by economic, social, and institutional factors that are difficult to predict. No one can forecast perfectly how many jobs will be available, or whether there will be too many or too few workers to fill those jobs. The reality is that employment is never a guarantee, even for individuals who pursue training in demand occupations.

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) is charged with promoting a coordinated and accountable employment and training system for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Responsibilities include setting and monitoring local performance standards, chartering CareerLink comprehensive and community centers that provide a range of services to jobseekers and employers, and certifying qualified training providers. Board members are appointed by Mayor Luke Ravenstahl (City of Pittsburgh) and Chief Executive Dan Onorato (Allegheny County).

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