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Florida runs on Trucks. Safety Begins with Quality Training.

By Jeffery Burkhardt - May 4, 2026



More than 85% of Florida's communities depend exclusively on trucks to move their goods. As the saying goes, if you wear it, eat it, or use it, it came to you on a truck.

From fresh produce and medical supplies to construction materials and everyday essentials, the state's economy runs on a massive freight network.

But the strength of Florida's trucking industry doesn't begin at a warehouse or a port, it starts at the steering wheel. And trucks cannot safely transport essential goods without qualified, highly trained professional drivers.

That's why recent national headlines about the trucking industry have raised understandable concerns. High-profile highway accidents, including incidents here in Florida, have put a spotlight on safety gaps and the risks posed by unqualified drivers. National investigations into so-called "chameleon carriers" (companies that evade safety rules and reemerge under new identities) have only added to public unease.

At the same time, federal audits have revealed troubling shortcomings in driver training programs. More than 550 schools nationwide, nearly one-third of those reviewed, were removed from the federal registry for failing to meet basic safety standards, with some offering shockingly short, inadequate training programs.

These are serious problems. But thankfully, there are positive solutions that should reassure Floridians and anyone who shares the road with a commercial vehicle. The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) have stepped up enforcement in a positive

and meaningful way, cracking down on unsafe operators and removing bad actors from the system. These actions are not punitive; they are necessary. And they are working.

By clearing out noncompliant training providers and holding carriers accountable, regulators are helping to restore integrity to an industry that depends on trust and professionalism. Strong enforcement doesn't weaken trucking; it strengthens it.

The relationship between high-quality truck driver training programs, the nation's carrier fleet, and federal regulators has never been more in sync with what is needed to keep the trucking industry strong and safe. That should be reassuring to motorists in Florida and across the nation.

This renewed momentum will be on full display this week in Cape Coral, where the top-tier truck driver training programs from around the country are convening to share best practices and advance safety standards. FMCSA Chief Counsel, Rebecca Pettit (formerly general counsel with the Florida Highway Patrol), will also attend to reinforce the federal government's renewed focus on quality training and accountability.

More than an industry conference, the Commercial Vehicle Training Association event is a key forum gathering the industry members responsible for preparing the next generation of drivers. These are the schools and instructors committed to doing things the right way: delivering rigorous, competency-based training that ensures drivers are ready for the demands of the road. Because when it comes to operating an 80,000-pound vehicle, there are no shortcuts.

High-quality CDL training programs don't rush students through a checklist. They build skills deliberately. That starts in the classroom, progressing to hands-on instruction, and reinforcing safety at

every step. They prepare drivers not just to pass a test, but to build a career grounded in professionalism and responsibility.

And that matters, because trucking is more than a job. For many, it is the first step in a stable and rewarding career path. At a time when Florida and the nation continue to face skilled workforce shortages, trucking offers real opportunity. It provides competitive wages, strong demand, and a clear pathway to economic mobility. For individuals looking to enter the workforce or change careers, it remains one of the most accessible and impactful options available.

That's why the current focus on enforcement and training reform is so important. It sends a clear message: the future of trucking will be built on safety and quality, not expediency. It ensures that those who cut corners are pushed out, while those who invest in doing things right are recognized and supported.

Florida depends on trucking. And trucking depends on drivers who are trained, prepared, and committed to safety. That's something everyone can get behind.

Jeffery Burkhardt is Chairman of the Commercial Vehicle Training Association, the nation's largest association of professional truck driver training programs