

Hit the Open Road—New Vets Offered CDL Waivers

Since 2013, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has allowed recently separated veterans with truck driving experience to waive the skills test normally required to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Since then, more than 330 individuals have received the waiver, with their numbers anticipated to grow over the next few years as more personnel separate from active duty. At the same time, Johnston County Community College has partnered with Fort Bragg to offer an eight-week training course at no cost to transitioning personnel. This program is currently funded through the middle of 2015 and teaches classes of up to 20 at a time on the base. Several other community colleges offer training programs — including Caldwell, Cape Fear, Davidson, and Sampson Community Colleges — as well as private schools throughout the state.

To access the waiver, individuals need to have been discharged within 90 days of applying, and must meet other qualifications such as operating a similar vehicle for the two-year period preceding their discharge and having a clean driving record. The applicant only needs to take the CDL written skills test in order to obtain a license.

These opportunities offer easier entry for recently separated veterans into the trucking industry, one that is expected to grow and that offers good wages and flexibility. Within North Carolina, demand for truckers has risen over the past few years, with more than 3,500 openings posted online during July 2014, up from 1,000 postings per month in 2010. And it's not just North Carolina that needs truckers —the American Trucking Associations (ATA) estimate that the nation is currently 25,000 drivers short of what is needed for a growing industry. Johnston County Community College estimates that graduates from their course can expect to earn an average of \$40,000 to \$45,000 in their first year of employment with an established company. The annual average wage for long-distance drivers nationally was \$49,540 in 2013, according to ATA estimates.

To initiate the [Military CDL Skills Waiver](#) process, contact the Commercial Driver License Unit at (919) 861-3319. To learn more about truck driver training programs at [Johnston County Community College](#), call (919) 989-7007.