



Questions Truckers Must Have the Answer To

Trucking jobs can pay rather well, and right now there is a high demand for qualified truckers. If you are considering a position within a trucking company, the following are some issues you should consider before accepting the job. It may help to ask about these issues at the end of an interview. That way you can talk to an employer about them face to face and have all the information you need to make a decision.



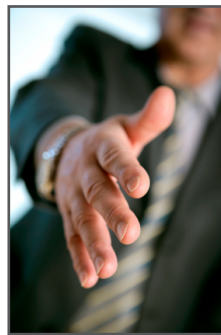
Before you accept any job, a large consideration must be given to pay. In the trucking industry, you will probably come across phrases that are unfamiliar to you so let us look at a few of them. Some phrases not commonly heard in

the private sector may include per diem, layover, and lumper. These, coupled with the price per mile you are paid, will figure into your wages.

Per diem in trucking is usually not a paid incentive, but the amount you are allowed tax-free. In other words, the expenses you incur on the road such as food and showers will be deducted from your taxable income at the end of the year. Some companies are beginning to add this to a driver's wages, so it is pertinent to inquire about it.

Layover sounds self-explanatory. However, you need to realize that it may not be defined by the company the same way it is by you. Common sense would tell you that a layover is when you are stuck waiting for a load or, by no fault of your own, you are unable to drive and acquire paid miles. You will need to know exactly what qualifies as layover time, when it begins, and how much it pays. Some companies require you to have waited longer than 24 hours for a load before they will pay layover.

Lumpers are an integral part of the industry and they are paid very well. A lumper is simply someone who unloads your truck. In many situations, you will arrive at the dock to find that the receiver does not handle the freight and you will need to pay a lumper to do it. Any company worth working for will pay this fee, or pay you if you decide to unload the freight yourself. With the going rate being over a \$100 sometimes, it can be worth it. But be aware that some receivers will not allow uncertified personnel on their docks.



Now for the big consideration: how much will you earn per mile? It seems that the bigger the number per mile the better right? Well, not always. Look at it more as a starting point in salary negotiation. When you first start out you will have very little wiggle room on this subject so pay attention to other details that will affect your earning potential. These include how the miles are figured and if you can use your own route to a destination. It

used to be that companies paid either actual miles or city-to-city. Today we have computers that give better mileage estimates but you should still expect to lose about 10% of the miles you drive. Most companies who pay this way will allow you to choose your route but will only pay for the computer-generated estimate. This can be good if you know a short cut, just be sure that it is a good route for a truck. There are places cars can go that a semi cannot. Similarly, be aware of where the company goes and know that some areas such as New York and Canada should pay you more due to the level of difficulty of getting in and out.

Do not overlook benefits the company offers when making your decision. A good health care plan is sometimes better than money in the bank. There are as many plans as there are companies, so make sure to know what you are getting. Retirement is also a key benefit in our current economy, especially with social security not being very secure. You will need to take care to protect your future.

Compare carefully the bonuses offered by a trucking company. They may offer mileage, on time, fuel, and safety bonuses, just to name a few. A safety bonus is a good indicator that the company will work to keep you and the freight safe.

Safety may not come to mind as a valid concern when considering a job, but be assured that it is. When talking about



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safety, ask about the equipment you will be using, how old it is, and how often they perform maintenance on it. Along with this comes the question of whether or not you will be assigned a truck or if you will share it. This is called slip seat driving and is more common in day use driving than over the road. Slip seat is important to you because you cannot know how another driver may take care of the vehicle or what he or she may leave behind in the truck. Most drivers prefer not to share their truck.

Ask how the rates are calculated. For example if you are picking up in Illinois and delivering in California, you do not want your time based on an average speed of 65 miles per hour. This is setting you up to miss your delivery time or break the law to accomplish it. Neither is a good company policy. With the stops you must make to fuel, sleep, and eat, a 50

mile per hour average is adequate. You may also want to know how the company handles log book violations. This will tell you a lot about their true safety commitment.

Log books are going to be getting a face-lift soon. Many major carriers are going paperless by using a computer system that automatically logs the hours a vehicle has been in service. Rumors are that it will be mandatory in all trucks soon. So know where your company is on that issue.

Finally, scrutinize the home time policy very well. It is one thing to make lots of money on the road. However, what good is it if you never see your family? The amount of home time will be a personal decision based on marital status and children, so be sure you can have the best of both worlds.

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