

BC3 to launch CDL prep training class as national trucker shortage looms

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(Butler, PA) Butler County Community College's first commercial driver's license prep training class will prepare students to take a learner's permit examination at the state Department of Transportation, qualify for advanced programs and help to fill what National Public Radio reports as a shortage of 900,000 truckers nationwide.

BC3's inaugural eight-hour class will introduce students to vehicle inspection and speed control, transporting cargo and passengers, combination vehicles, hazardous materials and managing space – topics that will appear on PennDOT's learner's permit examination, said Maria Chvala, BC3's coordinator of industrial safety training.

"This class," she said, "is designed to go through the driver's training manual to help students pass their learner's permit exam. We will explain these different sections from a personable standpoint, with instructor-student interaction rather than the student just reading the manual."

Categories in the commercial driver's license learner's permit examination are divided among general knowledge, skills and brakes, said Anthony Signoriello, campus supervisor at the New Castle School of Trades, which has offered a commercial truck driving class since 2001.

Students who pass the learner's permit examination would be eligible for commercial truck driving programs, such as the 7½-week course offered at the New Castle School of Trades, to earn their commercial driver's license.

"If a student does not have a permit, they would not be allowed to start the course," Signoriello said. "They would have to wait for the next class because they must have that permit in order to be a student at the school. They can't even go in the truck without it."

Graduates of his program who pass their commercial driver's license test are qualified to operate flatbed tractor-trailers, refrigerated units and box trailers, said Signoriello, who agrees with NPR's Jan. 9 report that cited the American Trucking Associations' estimate of the industry needing 900,000 more drivers to meet rising demand.

"We could graduate 20 people every week and we still would not have enough people to fill the jobs," Signoriello said. "There is so much need."

BC3 will offer its commercial driver's license prep training class from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 19 on BC3's main campus; May 21 at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing, 2849 W. State St., New Castle; and June 4, at BC3 @ Lawrence Crossing.

Participants need attend only one.

The cost of the course is \$175, plus a \$15 fee for the PennDOT commercial driver's manual, Chvala said.

The median salary for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in 2017 was \$20.42 per hour, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

BC3's class, Chvala said, is not a substitute for a truck driver training class or program, but introduces students to PennDOT's 187-page commercial driver's manual.

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