

DOT Compliance Help, Inc.™

DCH Dispatch

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**Don't Chew Your Fingernails -
The Four Cardinal Rules to DOT Compliance**

I was just thinking about an old friend from the MO National Guard a few days ago. His name was Mike and he was in charge of a construction platoon. He was a skilled plumber and project manager, and I told him I was impressed with his skill set. "Plumbing is Easy" he said, "there are only a few things you have to remember:"

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1. Righty tighty, lefty loosey
2. Hot on the left, cold on the right
3. Payday is Friday
4. Don't chew your fingernails

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You know, I thought, this idea of breaking down a process into several simple imperatives can be a valuable tool. So when Mike was running a renovation project, I made a list of the things he had to do to be successful:

- When tearing down, work from the top down
- When building, work from the bottom up
- Get older workers to be patient with younger ones
- Get younger workers to listen to the old hands
- Detect defects early so they can be repaired with a minimum of demolition and reconstruction
- Schedule material deliveries to avoid work stoppages
- Entertain visiting officers so they don't interfere with the project

Like Sun Tzu's 13 principals, you can apply this concept to anything worth doing. People in the trucking industry would like the whole DOT compliance system to be broken down into bullet points and printed on an index card. Now, I don't mean to say DOT Compliance is more complicated than construction or plumbing, but I'm not sure I can actually get it down to 7 or fewer bullets or one card. But I will try to make it really simple and easy to remember.

- First, be safe – no one can afford the real costs of accidents and fatalities
- Second, try to get all this paperwork stuff figured out so the DOT doesn't shut you down.

There are about four different types of paperwork:

- Driver Qualification
- Drug and alcohol testing and recordkeeping
- Hours of Service monitoring
- Maintenance management

Once you get a handle on these things, shift your focus to accident prevention.

The FMCSA calls this the 'accident countermeasures system':

The first part of every accident countermeasures system is, try really hard not to have wrecks. As simple as that sounds, you need scheduled safety training and some other organized processes to focus drivers on just driving safely.

The real job of a safety manager is to develop an organized approach to accident prevention, and a HUGE part of this job is driver safety training. You will need an internal accident register. Then, you need to study it. Look at all the minor accidents and near misses and try to identify trends. Then, ask yourself the three golden questions of accident prevention:

- 1 – Based on this set of observations, what type accident is most likely to occur?
- 2 – Based on the same set of observations, what is the most serious accident you can foresee?

Continued...

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Don't Chew Your Fingernails -

The Four Cardinal Rules to DOT Compliance (Continued...)

3 – What can we do differently to keep (1) and (2) from happening?

Once you have answered the three questions, stop the cycle of crashes by putting a “Countermeasure” in place to stop it before it happens.

Quite often, but not always, the answer is “get drivers to do this or stop doing that

– this is why driver training is such a big part of accident prevention”

And don't chew your fingernails.

It can cause stomach problems. And make your hands look funny.

So call us before the DOT calls you. I enjoy helping you do it right the first time.

Michael England, President

DOT Compliance Help, Inc.

The Four Cardinal Rules of Trucker Taxes (for Owner-Operators and Small Fleets)

I had the pleasure of meeting Mike and Jessica just a couple of weeks ago, and I feel both honored and humbled to get to work with this awesome organization.

So they are both amazing people, and they talk about a couple of articles that Mike has written before. Like the “Four Rules of Being a Plumber”. The idea is to condense the four most important things to

remember down into a neat, concise “4 Points” that people could remember.

So in an effort to provide you, their members, with the maximum value in the shortest space, they have asked me to come up with “The Four Cardinal Rules of Trucker Taxes”

Like, if my mom were a driver, and I could only tell her 4 important points about Trucker Taxes, what would be the four points that have so much value that these are the four that I would tell to my very mother, God rest her soul.

So here, my new trucking friends, are “The Four Cardinal Rules of Trucker Taxes”!

1. Estimated Payments – Yep, those dang periodic payments that Uncle wants us to send in during the year. But wait! We're gonna put an interesting little spin on this that will make these bad boys just a little easier to swallow.

And here it is: Make your estimated payments monthly, for two reasons—

- It will be much easier to come up with a payment for one little month rather than a whole quarter,
- You can easily gauge what your payment should be based on what kind of month you just had. So if you had a kick-butt month, you'll be flush with cash and you can send in a nice healthy payment. But if you had a sucky month, then send in a smaller payment. You with me?

These next three are guaranteed to leave more money in your pocket!

2. Keep receipts – Or at least keep as many as you can.

To make it easier on yourself, get a set of folders or other system so that you can just keep them by expense category right out of the gate. If you like, you can just pay one of the neighborhood kids to total them up for you, maybe quarterly or even just twice a year.

The important thing to remember is this: **Just because you don't have a receipt doesn't disqualify you from taking a deduction.**

Continued....



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The Four Cardinal Rules of Trucker Taxes (for Owner-Operators and Small Fleets) (Continued...)

Let's say you spend \$7000 a month on fuel, but for a couple of months you didn't keep all of them for whatever reason. Simply estimate your fuel for those two months based on your expense for the other ten months.

IRS guidelines actually permit you to estimate your expenses this way if you have as little as three consecutive months, and those three months show a consistent pattern or relationship to your gross income. Just estimating your expenses like this for a couple of heavy-duty expenses like fuel and repairs can easily save \$3,000 to \$5,000 or more on your tax bill!

3. Choose the right legal entity for your business– Just choosing the right entity to use for your trucking business can save you easily \$5,000 a year, every year. Very often, simply converting your sole proprietorship or single-member LLC to a Subchapter-S Corporation will allow you to cut your self-employment tax in half!

On a net income of \$50,000, that would save \$6,500 just like that. And that doesn't include additional tax savings due to expenses that can be fully deducted through a corporation that are either non-deductible or only partially deductible to a sole prop. or single-member LLC.

Be sure to consult with a CPA or attorney that is on top of the legal and tax distinctions among the different entity type. Just because an attorney or CPA is able to create an LLC or corporation certainly doesn't mean he or she knows the tax and legal features of each entity type.

And finally...

4. Check out these frequently over-looked trucking deductions:

Home Office

Supplies Purchased on the road and at home

Local Business-related mileage

Business Furnishings

Cell Phone

We created our very own "E-Z Tax Checklist for Truckers", especially for owner-operators and small fleets. We love it when a new client tells us that just having our expense checklist saved them several times our fee!

To take advantage of a very special offer exclusively for clients and friends of DOT Compliance

Help, [click here](#). eTruckerTax focuses on legal tax-cutting strategies for owner operators and small fleets, and also solving severe IRS problems. For immediate help, call Kristin at 770-984-8008.

Dennis Bridges, CPA
Executive Director
eTruckerTax

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Test Your Skills - Mock Audit Yourself!

This program was specifically designed to save your time and money, but still give you what you want, ANSWERS. If you have never had a [Mock Audit](#), DOT Audit, or even if it's been a year since your last "check up", this is a great tool for you to use to evaluate your current safety program. This is a tool for you to use to get prepared for your audit, get the answers you need and prioritize your efforts going forward - if there needs to be changes made to your current program. This would also be a great tool to use for companies with multiple terminals, to test each terminal manager and see what areas might be lacking at that location, without actually hiring someone to go in and do a full audit. Insurance companies and brokers could also greatly benefit from having this tool, test your companies you insure or hire to haul your freight to determine liability. Once the quiz is completed, we will need a day or two to evaluate it and provide you with your "Mock Rating" and "Roadmap to Compliance" Report. In the meantime, you'll be taking 3 classes that relate directly to DOT Audits.

Class 1: [Critical & Acute Violations](#)

Lets pretend you're a soldier crossing a mine field. If you had a map to show you where the mines are and you knew you could cross the field safely without disturbing the mines, wouldn't that make your journey across the field easier? That's exactly what this class does for you with DOT Compliance. The Critical & Acute Violations are the most serious violations and the ones that count against you on a Compliance Review. They also generate the most fines. Join us to learn how to avoid these violations.

Class 2: [Audit Preparation](#)

This DOT compliance seminar is designed for management and supervisors of new DOT entrants, human resource professionals with safety responsibilities, or even experienced Safety and Operations professionals that just want to stay current with the changing landscape. All attendees will receive a Certificate of Completion to keep on file.

Surviving DOT Visits and Interventions

Everyone fears the DOT - but if you understand their processes better, you can be prepared. With this training you can ensure that when you receive communications from the DOT, you can do the right things to prepare for Compliance Reviews and other interventions, minimize damage during the visit, and take the right steps after the fact.

This only works if you are honest with yourself and your current safety role. All of the information provided is kept in confidence and confidential.

Class 3: [New Entrant Preparation](#)

If you have recently registered with the FMCSA and have not yet been contacted about a safety audit, you will be at some point in the near future. The FMCSA will generally wait at least 3 months to get your operation on order, but they MUST complete the audit within 18 months of registration.

But, if you commit one of the "16 Unpardonable Sins," you automatically fail and your relatively harmless audit is turned into a full-blown Compliance Review with fines and a safety fitness rating, which will not be good if you have failed the audit. In this one-hour webinar, we will review these major violations and provide guidance to ensure you understand your responsibilities with regards to these basic requirements.

In August, you can register with a DISCOUNT CODE to receive \$99 off this product/ classes! Register using code (**Save99**). You must register by August 29th to receive the discount.

[Test My Skills](#)

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August Specials

This August we are offering On-Demand Training classes at a DEEP DISCOUNT. Each week a different class will be discounted to \$50 exclusively for our subscribers (if you are reading this newsletter you are a subscriber).

August 4-8 Discount Code: Aug48DQFiles	Driver Qualification Basic & Driver Qualification Files Register
August 11-15 Discount Code: Aug1115RoadIns	Roadside Inspection Survival Guide Register
August 18-22 Discount Code: Aug1822HOS	Hours of Service Basic / Drivers Logs Register
August 23-27 Discount Code: Aug2327LoadSec	Load Securement Register

Free Download

Freebie- Accident Decision Making Chart

