

PUCO Motor Carrier Overview

Commercial transportation companies in Ohio are public utilities under the jurisdiction of the PUCO. These companies pay special fees and taxes in exchange for exemption from other taxes, such as sales tax on equipment. They are also exempt from many forms of local regulation.

The PUCO is committed to improving road safety and ensuring quality, equitable service for Ohioans and commercial motor and hazardous materials carriers. The PUCO registers more than 58,000 general freight carriers, more than 2,500 hazardous materials transporters, more than 1,000 towing companies, and more than 300 household goods movers.

Audit and Inspections Program

The PUCO conducts audits, inspections, and safety reviews to evaluate motor carriers' safety records, policies, and procedures. The PUCO's comprehensive roadway safety program aims to prevent and reduce the number of accidents on Ohio's roadways and emphasizes the safe transportation of hazardous materials. The program is implemented in five parts:

1. Motor carrier regulatory programs including registration,
2. permitting insurance verification, and development of safety regulations
3. Driver and vehicle inspections
4. Motor carrier compliance reviews conducted on-site at company offices
5. Issuance of civil penalties for safety violations

Educational training grants

Civil penalties may be assessed to drivers, carriers, and hazardous materials shippers when violations are identified. Penalties may be assessed either as a result of safety violations detected in a roadside inspection or as a result of a safety audit. More than 12,000 penalties are assessed each year, resulting in approximately \$2 million being credited to Ohio's general revenue fund.

Moving Rights

When moving within the state of Ohio, consumers have important rights guaranteed by state law and enforced by the PUCO. Moving companies must register with the PUCO, provide consumers with cost estimates, and provide cargo insurance. Consumers unable to resolve a dispute with a moving company may file a complaint with the PUCO online or by phone at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

Security is Our Priority

A member agency in the State of Ohio Security Task Force, the PUCO has been actively involved in addressing the state's security needs since September 11, 2001. The PUCO conducts ongoing vehicle and site inspections at critical utility facilities. In addition, the PUCO conducts security sensitivity visits at high-risk hazardous material carrier locations. The United States Federal Motor Carrier Safety

Administration initiated security sensitivity visits to ensure that motor carriers have a security plan in place and that their employees know how to contact the appropriate officials if they witness suspicious activities.

PUCO field investigators report all suspicious persons and behavior to the appropriate law enforcement and industry officials. In the event of an emergency, the PUCO makes personnel and equipment available as directed to assist other government agencies and support emergency responders.

Hazardous Materials Safety Training

The PUCO awards hazardous materials training and planning grants to local government subdivisions, educational institutions, and state agencies in Ohio. The grants are used to train public safety and emergency services personnel in the proper techniques for the management of hazardous material spills and releases that can occur during transportation of those materials. Money for these grants comes from fines paid by hazardous material carriers and shippers. Individual grants are based upon applications to the PUCO and are awarded on a reimbursement basis.

In addition to these grants, the Cleveland State University hazardous materials training center receives \$400,000 each year to support their program that develops and provides training to government and private industry regarding the safe handling of hazardous materials.

Radioactive Shipment Inspections

The PUCO, in cooperation with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency and the Ohio Department of Health, inspects all highway route controlled radioactive materials shipments that pass through, or originate in, Ohio. PUCO Hazardous Materials Specialists train with these partner agencies on a regular basis to prepare for these shipments.

Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program

The Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) is a major grant program of the U.S. Department of Transportation for which the PUCO has been designated a lead agency. This program is utilized by the PUCO to develop a comprehensive approach to motor carrier safety in Ohio. Portions of this funding are also disbursed by the PUCO to the Ohio State Highway Patrol to support commercial vehicle inspection problems.

Generally, PUCO authority extends to commercial transportation that operates only within Ohio (intrastate). However, the federal government requires states to implement intrastate regulations that are similar to federal regulations. To accomplish this, the federal government contracts with state governments to enforce these regulations. Therefore, both intrastate and interstate commercial transportation may be included in PUCO supervision.

**If you would like to know more about the PUCO or have utility-related questions or concerns,
contact the PUCO at:
(800) 686-PUCO (7826)
(800) 686-1570 (TDD/TTY)
www.PUCO.ohio.gov**