1. Why conduct FBI background checks for CDL holders who are renewing or obtaining a hazardous materials endorsement?

The USA PATRIOT Act requires all CDL holders who are applying for or renewing a CDL with a hazardous materials endorsement to provide proof of U.S. citizenship or proof of appropriate immigration status, complete a Federal Security Threat Assessment Application, pay additional Federal fees, have their fingerprints taken and successfully complete a Federal criminal background check.

2. Who can apply for a HAZMAT endorsement?

In general, an individual must be a U.S. citizen or in an appropriate immigration status; must not have a disqualifying criminal offense; must not have been adjudicated as mentally incompetent or involuntarily committed to a mental institution; and must not pose a threat of terrorism or a threat to national or transportation security.

3. What violations would disqualify me from obtaining a HAZMAT endorsement?

Some violations disqualify a driver for a specified timeframe, and others are lifetime disqualifications:

1. A driver will be disqualified from holding a HAZMAT endorsement on a CDL if he/she was convicted or found not guilty by reason of insanity within the previous seven years or was released from prison in the last five years for any of the following crimes: (a) Assault with intent to murder; (b) Kidnapping or hostage taking; (c) Rape or aggravated sexual abuse; (d) Unlawful possession, use, sale, manufacture, purchase, distribution, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, delivery, import, export of, or dealing in a firearm or other weapon; (e) Extortion; (f) Dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation, including identity fraud; (g) Bribery; (h) Smuggling; (i) Immigration violations; (j) Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. 1961, et seq., or a State law that is comparable, other than the violations listed in (j) of the following paragraph (Permanently Disqualifying Criminal Offenses); (k) Robbery; (l) Distribution of, intent to distribute, or importation of a controlled substance; (m) Arson; (n) Conspiracy or attempt to commit any of these crimes.

2. A driver will be permanently disqualified from holding a HAZMAT endorsement on a CDL if he or she was convicted or found not guilty by reason of insanity for any of the following crimes: (a) Espionage; (b) Sedition; (c) Treason; (d) A crime listed in 18 U.S.C. Chapter 113B - Terrorism, or a State law that is comparable; (e) A crime involving a transportation security incident; (f) Improper transportation of a hazardous material under 49 U.S.C. 5124 or a State law that is comparable; (g) Unlawful possession, use, sale, distribution, manufacture, purchase, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, import, export, storage of, or dealing in an explosive or explosive device; (h) Murder; (i) Conspiracy or attempt to commit any of these crimes; (j) Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. 1961, et seq., or a State law that is comparable, where one of the predicate acts found by a jury or admitted by the defendant, consists of one of the offenses listed in (d) or (h) of this section.

3. A driver will be disqualified from holding a HAZMAT endorsement on a CDL if he/she is wanted or under indictment in any civilian or military jurisdiction for a felony listed in the previous two paragraphs until the want or warrant is released.

All of the crimes are disqualifying, whether entered in civilian court or military court.

4. Can I get a waiver?

Granting a waiver is at the sole discretion of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), as it is TSA who oversees the entire waiver process, not PennDOT. Information regarding the process for applying for a waiver can be found on TSA’s website.
5. What is changing with the HAZMAT Fingerprinting process?

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) currently completes the fingerprinting portion of the required Security Threat Assessment (STA) Process for HAZMAT drivers. PSP will no longer be completing the fingerprinting portion. Effective Monday, August 12, 2013, PennDOT will begin transitioning the fingerprinting process over to 3M Cogent, a vendor who is on statewide contract and has been approved by the FBI.

NOTE: The STA fee will remain at $60; however, on or after August 12, 2013, customers appearing at a PennDOT Driver License Center with the Hazardous Materials Endorsement Application for Security Threat Assessment Form (DL-288) will only remit a check or money order for $34, which is the Transportation Security Administration’s (TSAs) portion of the $60 fee. The remaining $26 (covering the FBI) fee will be collected by 3M Cogent either at the time the CDL holder pre-registers to have their fingerprints taken or at a 3M Cogent fingerprint location.

6. Who can I call if I have additional questions about the process?

If you have additional questions concerning the fingerprinting process, please DO NOT call the registration line. Additional questions should be referred to PennDOT’s Customer Care Center at 1-800-932-4600. Beginning August 12, 2013, 3M Cogent locations where fingerprints will be collected will be available online at www.cogentid.com, click PA link, click PennDOT link, and click Fingerprint Sites.

7. What will the HAZMAT Fingerprinting process be on or after August 12, 2013?

Just like today, the CDL holder or applicant must successfully complete the hazardous materials knowledge test at a PennDOT Driver License Center. Drivers are not required to schedule an appointment for knowledge testing. Upon successful completion of the hazmat knowledge test, applicants must complete a Hazardous Materials Endorsement Application for Security Threat Assessment Form (DL-288) and pay the $34 Transportation Security Administration fee for the Federal security threat assessment. This fee will be collected at the PennDOT Driver License Center. At that time, the CDL holder or applicant will be given a Fingerprint Authorization Letter (Pub 512), which outlines the necessary steps to completing the required background checks.

Next, the CDL holder will be required to register with 3M Cogent at www.cogentid.com. Then, the applicant may choose to visit any site for fingerprinting - there are no restrictions based on your home address. However, some fingerprinting sites require an appointment to be made. Visit www.cogentid.com and look under “Print Locations and Hours” for more information. While online registration is the preferred method of registering, telephone registration can also be completed by calling 1-888-439-2486.

Payment arrangements must be made prior to having fingerprinting completed. Upon arriving to the site, you must have paid in advance online or brought a money order or cashier’s check with you in order to have your prints completed.

Be advised that fingerprint traffic is typically heavy during lunch hours. Plan your visit to fingerprint locations accordingly.

8. Once PennDOT transitions to 3M Cogent, how will I register for fingerprinting?

Registration is best conducted online at www.cogentid.com. Click PA link, click PennDOT link, click Register Online. This way you can ensure the accuracy of all demographic information you submit. Registration involves collecting pertinent demographic information that is required by law from each applicant. During registration you will also be given the chance to pay electronically for your background check. Online registration alleviates many data collection problems and effectively speeds processing at the fingerprint site. You may also register by phone at 1-888-439-2486.

9. Can I pre-register with 3M Cogent to have my fingerprints taken before I pass the hazmat knowledge test with PennDOT?

Yes; however, you may be asked to provide your Fingerprint Authorization Letter (Pub. 512) to the 3M Cogent representative to show that you successfully completed the hazmat knowledge test.

10. How will I know when I need to recertify my HAZMAT?

PennDOT will mail you a HAZMAT recertification notice approximately seven months before your CDL expires. The recertification notice outlines all of the necessary steps you must take to renew your HAZMAT endorsement.
11. Can I renew CDL/Hazmat early?
Yes, after you have successfully completed the TSA security background check. If you renew before successfully completing the background, your Hazmat endorsement will be dropped.

12. What if I make a mistake on my registration with 3M Cogent?
If you discover a mistake on your registration prior to being fingerprinted, you may re-register at no additional cost. This re-registration will replace the initial registration. To modify your registration prior to fingerprinting go online at www.cogentid.com, click “PAlink”, click “PennDot” link, click “Modify Registration.” Once you are fingerprinted, you may not modify your demographic information.

As long as changes are made to the registration and the social security number is kept the same, payment will not be affected. Payment is only taken after fingerprints are collected and sent to the FBI.

Once you are fingerprinted, no changes can be made without additional payment.

NOTE: The fingerprint process initiates a Federal background check, so inaccuracies may delay FBI approval. It is critical when registering to be fingerprinted that your identity information matches the information contained on your PA driver’s license. If you recently moved, you are required by PA law to update your CDL with your current address. You must submit a DL-80CD application and pay the applicable duplicate fee. This correction to your CDL can be processed at any PennDOT Driver License Center or the DL-80CD may be mailed to PennDOT for processing.

13. I just registered to be fingerprinted at a 3M Cogent location, and I paid online. How much time do I have to get fingerprinted?
Fingerprinting may occur immediately upon the successful completion of your registration, as long as you passed the hazmat knowledge test at a PennDOT location. If you have successfully registered with 3M Cogent you will receive a Registration ID (REG ID). Take this REG ID, the Fingerprint Authorization Letter (Pub. 512) provided to you by PennDOT and appropriate identification documents to any 3M Cogent fingerprint site to complete your fingerprinting. We recommend that printing take place no later than 30 days after registration. If you pay by credit card, the bank will hold your money for the duration of the open registration. If after 90 days the registration remains unused, your registration will be cancelled and the payment will be automatically refunded to your credit card.

NOTE: Once you submit the $34 TSA fee to PennDOT to initiate the security threat assessment, you must complete the process within 6 months. Once a security threat assessment request is greater than 6 months old, TSA will close the request. To reinitiate the security threat assessment process, you will be required to resubmit the Hazardous Materials Endorsement Application for Security Threat Assessment Form (DL-288) and pay the $34 TSA fee.

14. What payment options do I have with PennDOT for my Federal security threat assessment?
The TSA fee is $34 and can only be paid by a check or money order made payable to PennDOT.

15. What options do I have to pay 3M Cogent for my fingerprinting?
Applicant background checks are $26. Payment may be made online at the time of registration using a debit or credit card. Payment may also be made with a Money Order or Cashier’s Check at the fingerprint site. Money Orders and Cashier’s Checks must be made payable to 3M COGENT. NO CASH, PERSONAL CHECKS and NO ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS for background checks will be accepted at the fingerprint sites.

Beginning on Monday, August 12, 2013, you will be able to go online at www.cogentid.com to register and to make payment. For customers who do not have internet access, you may call the registration line at 1-888-439-2486. It is faster and easier to register yourself online.

16. Are there any 3M Cogent fingerprint locations in my area?
There will be 3M Cogent fingerprint service sites across the State. The fingerprint sites hours of operation, may differ. Beginning August 12, 2013, you may review the 3M Cogent website at www.cogentid.com. It is recommended that you review Cogent’s website and the site specific web page (if provided) to learn more about the site nearest you. Customers who do not have internet access will be able to call the registration line at 1-888-439-2486.
17. What will I be required to bring to the fingerprint site?
You must be registered prior to proceeding to a fingerprint site. At the fingerprint site, you will be asked to produce a qualified State or Federal photo ID before processing may begin, and your Registration ID (REG ID). In addition, you may be asked to provide a copy of the Fingerprint Authorization Letter (Pub. 512) issued to you at the PennDOT Driver License Center. See “What to bring” for a list of approved ID types at www.cogentid.com. Applicants will not be processed if they cannot produce acceptable identification.

18. Will applicants receive a receipt verifying that fingerprinting has been completed?
Registration Status and Proof of Print Transaction may be viewed online. You may also print a copy of your receipt from the 3M Cogent website at www.cogentid.com.

19. What happens to my fingerprints after they are submitted?
The applicant’s scanned fingerprints will be electronically transmitted to the Pennsylvania State Police for forwarding to the FBI.

20. What happens if my fingerprints are rejected by the FBI?
Poor fingerprint detail may be caused by age, trade, or some other environmental/physical condition. In the case of a fingerprint rejection by the FBI, applicants are requested by the FBI to submit a second set of fingerprints, at no charge to the applicant. This second submission must occur before alternative means of conducting a federal background can be initiated. If an applicant receives a rejection letter from 3M Cogent, they must submit a second set of fingerprints if they wish to complete their applicant background check. Individuals should take their rejection letter and proper identification to the nearest Pennsylvania Fingerprint location. A second fingerprint submittal will be conducted at no charge. Individuals do not need to re-register for their second fingerprinting session if they received a rejection letter from 3M Cogent. Individuals do not need to re-register for their second fingerprinting session if they received a rejection letter from 3M Cogent. If an individual’s fingerprints are rejected a second time by the FBI, notification is forwarded to the PennDOT by the FBI. PennDOT will then conduct a name based check based on the demographic information on the initial application. Results of the FBI name based record check are also forwarded by the FBI to PennDOT for interpretation. PennDOT will send name check determination letters to the applicant.

21. What happens if I do not receive my official Federal Criminal history background check?
Once you have had your fingerprints taken at a 3M Cogent site, they are transmitted through the Pennsylvania State Police to the FBI. If you have not received a rejection letter from 3M Cogent systems notifying you that your fingerprints were rejected and a new set of fingerprints is required, within 10 days, then you can assume your fingerprint submission was processed successfully. Complete processing of the FBI record check should take no longer than 8-12 weeks. If you have not received your Hazardous Materials Endorsement (HME) from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) within this timeframe it is recommended you call their helpdesk at: Help Desk at (877) 429-7746 (7AM-9PM Eastern, Monday - Friday).

22. How do I know if my personal information is secure?
Your personal data traveling from the fingerprint equipment is comprehensively secured and regulated by both 3M Cogent and State and Federal regulations governing the use of that data.

The 3M Cogent statewide fingerprint service is housed within a secured network that is protected by firewall devices designed to secure important information. The 3M Cogent fingerprint collection network has been approved by both the Commonwealth and the FBI for the protection of personal and private data. All communication traffic to and from the fingerprint machine is either encrypted or conducted through encrypted ports.

23. What is contained in the FBI criminal report?
An FBI Identification Record often referred to as a criminal history background check or rap sheet is a listing of certain information taken from fingerprint submissions retained by the FBI in connection with arrests and, in some instances, federal employment, naturalization, or military service. If the fingerprints are related to an arrest, the Identification Record includes name of the department that submitted the fingerprints to the FBI, the date of arrest, the arrest charge, and the disposition of the arrest, if known to the FBI. All arrest data is obtained from fingerprint submissions, disposition reports and other reports submitted by agencies having criminal justice responsibilities.
24. I don't agree with something on my record. Who do I contact?
If you have questions about the content of your report and wish to challenge any part of your criminal record, reference steps 1 through 3 below. PennDOT cannot change your record or the content of your report.

1. Challenge of a Federal Criminal Record
Once you have received and reviewed your Federal record response, if you believe it contains inaccurate or incomplete information, you may request a change or correction by contacting the agency or agencies that submitted the information to the FBI, or you may send a written challenge request to the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division. The CJIS Division serves as the nation’s central repository and custodian for fingerprints and related criminal history record information. As custodian of such arrest information, the CJIS Division does not have the authority to modify any criminal history record information unless specifically notified to do so by the owner of the information.

2. Challenges Submitted to the FBI
You may submit a record challenge to the FBI’s CJIS Division by writing to the following address:

   FBI CJIS Division
   Attention: Correspondence Group
   1000 Custer Hollow Road
   Clarksburg, WV 26306

   Your written request should clearly identify the information that you feel is inaccurate or incomplete and should include copies of any available proof or supporting documentation to substantiate your claim. For example, if your disposition information is incorrect or missing, you may submit documentation obtained from the court having jurisdiction over the arrest or the office prosecuting the offense. The Correspondence Group will contact appropriate agencies in an attempt to verify or correct challenged entries for you. Upon receipt of an official communication from the agency with jurisdiction over the data, the FBI will make appropriate changes and notify you of the outcome. Record challenges submitted to the FBI are processed in the order in which they are received.

* (NOTE: If your FBI criminal history background check reveals information you believe is incomplete or inaccurate, you may challenge the accuracy of the information in that record. The procedure for obtaining a change, correction, or update of an FBI identification record is set forth in 28 CFR 16.34.)

3. Challenges to Pennsylvania Arrests on Federal RAP sheet
If you wish to challenge a Pennsylvania arrest listed on your Federal RAP sheet, you can log onto: https://epatch.state.pa.us/ and follow the instructions to complete a Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History (PATCH) check. You will receive your PATCH response along with specific instructions on how to challenge any believed inaccurate or incomplete information.