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Illinois

Study Guide

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CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1: Licensing Requirements

1.1 Illinois Driver's License Classifications

Illinois categorizes driver's licenses based on the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of the vehicle. A standard license for cars and small trucks is a Class D. It is important to know what your license permits you to drive, as well as to recognize the other classifications for vehicles like motorcycles and large trucks.

- ✓ A Class D license is for any motor vehicle with a GVWR of 16,000 pounds or less.
- ✓ A Class L license is for any motor-driven cycle with less than 150cc displacement.
- ✓ A Class M license is for any motorcycle or motor-driven cycle.
- ✓ Classes A, B, and C are for larger vehicles, typically requiring a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

1.2 Maximum Vehicle Height on Illinois Roads

All drivers should be aware of the maximum vehicle height allowed on Illinois highways to avoid collisions with overpasses, bridges, and tunnels. The maximum height for any vehicle, including its load, is 13 feet, 6 inches. This is a critical safety dimension for anyone driving a tall vehicle like an RV or a rental truck.

- ✓ The maximum height for all vehicles on all Illinois highways is 13 feet, 6 inches.
- ✓ This height measurement includes the vehicle and any load it is carrying, measured from the ground to the highest point.

1.3 Rules for Overweight Vehicles and Weigh Stations

To protect road surfaces, Illinois enforces strict weight limits. All vehicles with a gross weight of 16,000 pounds or more must stop at any official weighing station they encounter. As a driver of a passenger car, you should be aware of this rule and expect large trucks to exit the highway for these mandatory checks.

- ✓ All vehicles weighing 16,000 pounds or more must stop at official weighing stations.
- ✓ If a vehicle is found to be overweight, the driver must stop and remain until part of the load is removed or shifted to comply with the law.

1.4 Warning Devices for Disabled Large Vehicles

When a large truck or other second division vehicle is stopped on or near a highway, the driver must deploy specific warning devices for safety. Drivers should recognize these devices and provide extra space. These vehicles must carry either flares, red electric lanterns, or portable red emergency reflectors.

- ✓ A disabled second division vehicle must be equipped with three flares, three red electric lanterns, or three portable red emergency reflectors.
- ✓ For daytime stops, these vehicles must also have two red cloth flags (at least 12-inches square) or two portable red emergency reflectors.
- ✓ Vehicles transporting explosives or flammable materials are prohibited from using flame-producing signals like flares and must use electric lanterns or reflectors.

1.5 Definition of a Second Division Vehicle

In Illinois, vehicles are classified as either first or second division. A first division vehicle is a standard passenger car. A second division vehicle is a broader category that includes vehicles designed to carry more than 10 people, used for living quarters, or designed for pulling or carrying cargo. Understanding this distinction is important as these vehicles have different rules and safety requirements.

- ✓ A second division vehicle is one designed to carry more than 10 persons.
- ✓ A vehicle designed or used for living quarters (like an RV) is a second division vehicle.
- ✓ Any vehicle designed for pulling or carrying freight or cargo is a second division vehicle.
- ✓ A standard passenger car (first division vehicle) that is remodeled to carry cargo becomes a second division vehicle.

1.6 Vehicles Exempt from Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Rules

While large commercial trucks require a special CDL, Illinois law provides exemptions for certain vehicles. This means you may encounter large vehicles on the road, such as recreational vehicles or farm trucks, being operated by drivers without a CDL. These exemptions have specific conditions.

- ✓ A Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is not required to operate a recreational vehicle (RV) when it is being used primarily for personal use.
- ✓ Operators of farm equipment are exempt from CDL requirements when transporting farm products or supplies within 150 air miles of the farm.
- ✓ Operators of firefighting equipment and military vehicles (for military purposes) are also exempt from needing a CDL.

CHAPTER 2

Chapter 2: Traffic Safety Laws

2.1 Illinois Statutory and Situational Speed Limits

Illinois law establishes maximum speed limits, but drivers are always responsible for adjusting their speed to current conditions. The maximum speed limit is 70 mph on posted interstate highways and 55 mph on most other highways. Regardless of the posted limit, drivers must reduce speed when approaching intersections, going around curves, approaching the top of a hill, or in hazardous conditions like bad weather or heavy traffic.

- ✓ The maximum speed limit on Illinois interstate highways is 70 mph, where posted.
- ✓ The maximum speed limit on most other highways is 55 mph unless otherwise posted.
- ✓ You must always slow down when approaching and crossing an intersection or going around a curve.

2.2 Identifying and Driving Near Slow-Moving Vehicles

In Illinois, certain vehicles like farm equipment, construction machinery, and animal-drawn carts must display a red and orange triangular emblem on their rear. When approaching a vehicle with this emblem, drivers must be prepared to slow down significantly. These vehicles are required by law to travel in the right-hand lane. When lights are necessary, they must also be equipped with a high-mounted flashing amber signal that is visible from at least 500 feet.

- ✓ A slow-moving vehicle is identified by a red and orange triangular emblem on its rear.
- ✓ Vehicles displaying a slow-moving emblem must drive in the right-hand lane.
- ✓ When lights are required, a slow-moving vehicle must have a flashing amber signal visible for at least 500 feet.

2.3 Mandatory Stops at Railroad Crossings for Specific Vehicles

While all drivers must be cautious at railroad crossings, Illinois law mandates that certain vehicles must always stop. This includes school buses, vehicles carrying passengers for hire, and vehicles placarded for hazardous materials. The required stop must be made within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail. After stopping, the driver must look and listen for a train and proceed only when safe, without changing gears while crossing the tracks.

- ✓ School buses, vehicles for hire, and vehicles with hazardous materials must stop at all railroad crossings.
- ✓ The mandatory stop must be made between 15 and 50 feet from the nearest rail.
- ✓ Drivers of these vehicles must not shift gears while crossing the railroad tracks.

2.4 Placing Warning Devices for a Disabled Vehicle

If a second division vehicle (e.g., a large truck) or a vehicle towing another becomes disabled, the driver must set out warning devices like flares or reflectors. The placement rules differ by road type. On a divided highway, devices must be placed 10 feet from the vehicle on the traffic side, and then 100 feet and 200 feet to the rear. On other roads, they are placed 10 feet to the side, 100 feet to the rear, and 100 feet to the front. Flame-producing devices like flares are prohibited for vehicles carrying explosives or flammable cargo.

- ✓ On a divided highway, warning devices for a disabled vehicle are placed at 10 ft (traffic side), 100 ft (rear), and 200 ft (rear).
- ✓ On a two-way roadway, warning devices are placed at 10 ft (traffic side), 100 ft to the rear, and 100 ft to the front.
- ✓ Flares or signals produced by flame must not be used for disabled vehicles carrying explosives or flammable liquids.

CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3: Driving Safely — Basic Vehicle Control

3.1 Impairment from Alcohol, Cannabis, and Drugs

Illinois has strict laws against driving under the influence of alcohol, cannabis (including medical), and other controlled substances. It is illegal to operate a vehicle with any trace of an impairing substance in your system, as these substances severely affect vision and reaction time.

- ✓ It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on Illinois highways with any trace of a controlled drug, substance, or intoxicating compound in your blood.
- ✓ Medical cannabis transported in a vehicle must be stored in a tamper-evident container and kept in an area that is inaccessible to the driver while the vehicle is in motion.

3.2 Illinois Distracted Driving and Cellphone Laws

To prevent distracted driving, Illinois law prohibits the use of handheld electronic devices for communication while operating a motor vehicle. This includes texting and making calls on a handheld phone. The use of headsets is also forbidden.

- ✓ The use of handheld cellphones, texting, or using other electronic communication devices while operating a motor vehicle is illegal.
- ✓ Hands-free devices or Bluetooth technology are permitted only for drivers who are age 19 and older.
- ✓ Wearing a headset while driving is prohibited, unless the device is a hearing aid.

3.3 Placing Warning Devices for Disabled Vehicles

When a vehicle becomes disabled on a roadway, Illinois law requires the placement of specific warning devices like flares, lanterns, or reflectors to alert other drivers. The placement rules vary depending on the type of roadway, the vehicle's cargo, and whether the vehicle is near an obstruction like a hill or curve.

- ✓ For a disabled vehicle carrying explosives or flammable materials, you must use three red electric lanterns or reflectors, placing one 10 feet to the traffic side, one 100 feet to the front, and one 100 feet to the rear.
- ✓ If a vehicle is disabled within 500 feet of a curve or hill, the warning signal must be placed between 100 and 500 feet from the vehicle to warn oncoming traffic.
- ✓ During daylight hours on a divided highway, nonflammable red flags or reflectors must be placed 100 feet and 200 feet to the rear of the disabled vehicle.

3.4 Illinois Rules for Towing Another Vehicle

Towing a vehicle in Illinois is governed by specific safety regulations. These laws cover the strength and length of the connection, the mandatory use of safety chains, and restrictions on who can occupy a towed vehicle.

- ✓ The drawbar or other connection between two vehicles may not exceed 15 feet in length.
- ✓ Every towed vehicle must be connected to the towing vehicle with two safety chains or cables strong enough to prevent the vehicles from separating if the drawbar breaks.
- ✓ A passenger is not allowed to ride in a trailer or other vehicle being towed on a public highway, with very limited exceptions for parades or farming activities.

3.5 Marking Projecting Loads on a Vehicle

If you are transporting a load that extends significantly from the rear of your vehicle, you must mark it properly to ensure it is visible to other drivers. The required markings change depending on whether it is daytime or nighttime.

- ✓ A load that extends 4 feet or more to the rear of a vehicle must be marked with a red flag or cloth, at least 12 inches square, during daylight hours.
- ✓ At night, a load projecting 4 feet or more must be marked with a red light that is visible for at least 500 feet.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4: Hazardous Situations

4.1 Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol and Drugs

Illinois law prohibits driving while impaired by alcohol, cannabis (including medical), or any other controlled substance. Alcohol is a primary cause of fatal crashes, and even a small amount can impair vision and reaction time. It is illegal to drive with any trace of a controlled substance in your system.

- ✓ It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on Illinois highways with any trace of a controlled drug, substance, or intoxicating compound in your blood.
- ✓ Medical cannabis must be transported in a tamper-evident container and kept in an area that is inaccessible while the vehicle is in motion.

4.2 Illinois Laws on Distracted Driving and Cellphone Use

Illinois law strictly prohibits the use of handheld electronic devices while driving. This includes texting, talking on a handheld phone, watching videos, or using social media. Hands-free or Bluetooth use is permitted only for drivers aged 19 and older. Using a phone in handheld mode is only allowed in very specific situations.

- ✓ The use of handheld cellphones, texting, or other electronic communications while operating a motor vehicle is illegal in Illinois.
- ✓ Hands-free or Bluetooth technology is only legally permitted for drivers who are age 19 and older.
- ✓ You may only use a non-hands-free cellphone to report an emergency, while parked on the shoulder, or when stopped in traffic with the vehicle in neutral or park.

4.3 Responding to a Tire Blowout While Driving

A tire failure, or blowout, can cause a sudden loss of vehicle control. The correct response is to maintain control of the steering and gradually slow down. Slamming on the brakes is a natural but incorrect reaction that can make the situation worse.

- ✓ If a tire suddenly fails, you must grip the steering wheel firmly with both hands to maintain control.
- ✓ Do not brake hard after a tire blowout. Stay off the brake until the vehicle has slowed down, then brake gently and pull off the road.

4.4 How to Correct a Rear-Wheel Skid

A rear-wheel skid occurs when the back tires lose traction, causing the rear of the vehicle to slide sideways. This is often caused by excessive braking or acceleration on slippery surfaces. To recover, you must steer in the direction of the skid and avoid braking.

- ✓ If your vehicle's rear wheels begin to skid, take your foot off the brake and accelerator.
- ✓ To correct the skid, quickly steer in the direction you want the vehicle to go (steer into the skid).

4.5 Marking Projecting Loads on a Vehicle

In Illinois, any load that extends 4 feet or more beyond the rear of a vehicle must be properly marked to ensure it is visible to other drivers. The type of marking required depends on the time of day. During daylight hours, a red flag is used. At night, a red light is required.

- ✓ A load projecting 4 feet or more from the rear of a vehicle must be marked with a red flag or cloth at least 12 inches square during the day.
- ✓ At night or when visibility is poor, a projecting load of 4 feet or more must be marked with a red light visible for at least 500 feet.

4.6 The Dangers and Prevention of Drowsy Driving

Driving while drowsy is extremely dangerous as it impairs reaction time, awareness, and judgment, similar to driving under the influence. A fatigued driver may not be able to react in time to prevent a crash. It is crucial to be well-rested before driving and take precautions on long trips.

- ✓ Fatigue can impair your ability to drive safely even if you do not fall asleep.
- ✓ To avoid drowsy driving on long trips, you should stop frequently for breaks.

4.7 Safe Procedures for Backing a Vehicle

Backing up is inherently dangerous due to limited visibility. Before backing, a driver should physically check the path for any obstacles. When backing, it should be done slowly, and turning towards the driver's side is recommended for a better view.

- ✓ Before backing, you should get out and walk completely around the vehicle to ensure the path is clear.
- ✓ Always back up as slowly as possible and turn toward the driver's side for better visibility.

4.8 Actions to Take in Case of a Vehicle Fire

If your vehicle catches fire, your first priority is to get to a safe location. Pull off the road into an open area, away from buildings, trees, or other vehicles. If you attempt to extinguish the fire yourself, do so from a safe distance and aim at the base of the flames.

- ✓ In case of a vehicle fire, immediately pull over to an open area, away from anything that could also catch fire.
- ✓ When using a fire extinguisher, position yourself upwind and aim at the source or base of the fire, not into the flames.

4.9 Safety Procedures When Stranded on a Roadway

If your vehicle breaks down on an Illinois road, specific safety protocols must be followed. The first steps are to pull over to the right shoulder if possible and activate your hazard lights. You should then call for help and use reflective triangles to warn other drivers.

- ✓ If your vehicle becomes stranded, pull over to the right shoulder, turn on your hazard lights, and call for assistance (911, or *999 on an Illinois Tollway).
- ✓ For safety, you should remain inside your vehicle with your seatbelt fastened while waiting for help to arrive, especially on high-capacity roads.