

## EVERY YEAR 115,000 NEW TRUCK DRIVER JOBS ARE BEING CREATED, YET ONLY 10 PERCENT ARE BEING FILLED: WHY IS THERE A DEARTH OF TRUCK DRIVER?



In these sluggish times, when jobs are scarce it is hardly credible that there are job-vacancies, thousands of them, that employers are finding hard to fill. Transportation companies have an increasing number of their tractor-trailer fleet sitting idle as they cannot find drivers to drive them. Tribe Transportation located in Georgia says that it needs ten new drivers for its new purchases but has managed to find just four. The four are old hands at the jobs and all in their fifties meaning that they don't have too many years to go before they retire. Matt Handte, the company's Executive Vice President for sales and operations said that he finds it really surprising that he is looking for people to hire and they cannot be found. He said that not only were drivers hard to find, there also was a dearth of logistic brokers who line up freight transportation for customers. There was a shortage of truck drivers earlier too, but now the problem has become even more acute as the economy is showing signs of recovery and demands for goods are increasing. Also on the east coast the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy means a lot of clean up operations and rebuilding to be done and goods have to be transported making the shortage even more critical and serious. It is estimated that US companies will create upwards of 115,000 new jobs each year for the next four to five years, but the number of skilled drivers that are being trained are less slightly more than a 1,000, which means that barely 10 percent of the vacancies are being filled. Page Siplon, executive director of the Georgia Center of Innovation for Logistics said that given that 80 percent of the country's goods and merchandise are transported by trucks a shortage of drivers means that goods cannot reach where they are needed. Moreover, stores cannot keep up with demand, owing to shortage of supplies, artificially pushing up the price for buyers. Siplon said that comparing statistics by the U.S. Department of Labor which reveal how many more truck drivers were required, with statistics of the Education Department that told how many drivers were being trained showed an alarming picture. It showed that that almost 60 percent of the jobs would remain unfilled because of the dearth of trained drivers. Tom Pronk, vice president of recruiting for C.R. England, an Utah-based company said that the shortage is no surprise but something that all people in the industry are concerned about. Everyone has job vacancies for truck drivers. He warned that the situation is going to deteriorate even further, before it starts getting better. It's not that truck drivers do not make good money. The Department of Labor reported that the average yearly wage for tractor-trailer drivers is \$37,770, with some managing in excess of \$57,000. Handte and Pronk said that experienced drivers can rake in as much as \$100,000 per year. This is not money to be scoffed at for a job that requires training but not too much academic qualifications. However, even though they do not require a college degree they do have to earn a commercial driver's license. The trouble is that government regulations make it difficult for older drivers to remain in the profession. Safety regulations, persistent drug testing, a closer scrutiny of a driver's working hours and limits on the number of traffic citations a driver can have hassle them to retire, even if they want to continue. Moreover, the younger generation is loathe to spend days and week on the road and find it rather lonesome to be away from their families and other loved ones. "For our new generation who's coming into the industry, the job is not as romantic to them as it was to their predecessors. It's a tough job to be an on-the-road trucker," Pronk said.