Commercial Vehicle Enforcement History

The Beginnings

Missouri created the Missouri Highway Department in March 1913. Almost immediately, construction began to link all adjoining county seats with paved roads. By the 1920s, the state legislatures realized economic growth was tied to quality transportation and wanted to “get Missouri out of the mud”. In 1926, the Highway Department hired five weight officers, equipped with portable scales, motorcycles with side cars, uniforms, and side arms (this makes commercial vehicle enforcement the oldest statewide law enforcement division in Missouri). These weight officers were tasked with enforcing the load limits as set by legislation and protecting the extensive investment Missouri was making in highways.

On March 10, 1942, the chief engineer of the Highway Department recommended the Highway Commission transfer the weight officer duties to the Highway Patrol. Patrol Colonel M. Stanley Ginn advised he would be willing to employ each of the present weight officers as scale house operators at a monthly salary of $125. On June 1, 1942, the Missouri State Highway Patrol took over the operation of the 12 weight stations formerly operated by the Maintenance Division of the State Highway Department. Colonel Ginn announced the 12 civilian weigh clerks were employed to assist in the operation of these weight stations. Weight station operations were placed under the direct control of the troop in which they existed. Those original stations were at north Kansas City, Savannah, Noland Road and U.S. Highway 40, Macon, Hannibal, St. Charles, Gray Summit, Imperial, Springfield, Carthage, Cape Girardeau, and Kingdom City. The stations, manned by civilian weight clerks, operated a minimum of 10 hours a day, and 20 hours where truck traffic was particularly heavy. Troopers operated the stations when necessary.

Early Operation

Scales were manually operated from inside the scale house. Weight officers were civilians and dressed in civilian wear. Scale maintenance was done by private companies until 1952, when M.E. Swoveland was hired as the first scale maintenance engineer. In January 1953, Lieutenant David E. Harrision (former colonel) was assigned to the Division of Safety and Administration to supervise weight station operations and building maintenance.

Uniforms replaced the clerk’s civilian clothes in 1954. They were also issued cap badges numbered from one to 63. In January 1955, Colonel Waggoner appointed Thomas E. Whitecotton as the captain of the new Division of Weights and Commercial Vehicles.

In February 1960, Portable scale trucks were introduced by the Patrol. The Dodge trucks were equipped with four scales, ramps, and a three-way radio. Weight inspectors D.L. Hendrix and N.J. Freeman were the first two to use the portable-scale trucks.

Early Weight Inspector's Stories

Robert E. "Nookie" Lee was hired in 1943 as a weight inspector. All he knew about the job when he was hired was that it involved trucks. "I went to town and bought several pairs of striped overalls and blue denim work shirts and reported to Sergeant George Pate … imagine my surprise when I found out I could wear slacks and a sports shirt, and that I didn't have to crawl around and get dirty at all, just sit in the scale house and weigh trucks. I was in hog heaven." said Nookie. There was a radio receiver, but no transmitter. He had to use the telephone to talk to Troop F Headquarters. Files were kept in pasteboard boxes or orange crates. There was no inside plumbing, "In a pinch you hiked up the hill to the blackberry patch. Lee was paid $125 per month and took home $108.

One winter night, Sergeant Dix and Nookie were at the scale house. A tractor-trailer pulled onto the platform. The rig was covered in ice and snow. Nookie said the truck was 6,000 pounds overweight. When Nookie told the driver, he was shocked. He asked if they had taken the ice into consideration. The driver then asked if he could knock it off and re-weigh. They let him and he borrowed a sledge hammer and wrecking bar from the truck stop across the highway. Afterward, the truck weighed 200-300 pounds less than it had when weighed in Alabama. After that, Nookie said that they closed the scales when they had winter storms and trucks started building up accumulations of ice and slush.

Nookie said in the early days, there were justices of the peace (not full-time judges). Sometimes, Nookie and the truck driver would go find the local justice on his farm—in his barn or in a cornfield. Afterward, if the trucker wanted a receipt, the justice wrote on the back of the pink summons paper "You were found guilty by this court and fined X dollars." He signed it and then the truck driver and I drove back to the scale house.

James D. "Doc" Harris joined the Patrol on May 1, 1948. He had three days off a month and worked 10-hour shifts at scale F-1 in Kingdom City. The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division was not yet created, thus he reported to a zone sergeant. "The weigh station was a 24-hour operation. When I went to work out there, it was very busy clear through the night." said Doc. During his time with the Patrol, at least four trucks crashed into the scale house when their air brakes leaded down while parked at a rest stop unattended on a nearby hill. Another truck missed the weigh station but went headlong into the pit where the platform scales sat (The scale mechanism had been removed for repairs).

Doc said the most unusual truck case was one that was over length, over width, and overweight. It was a tractor and flatbed trailer hauling two barges from the Missouri River in St. Louis to Kansas City. It had no permits of any kind, weighed about 112,000

pounds, was wider than the entire roadway, and was on U.S. Highway 40, which was a two-lane road.

Doc was the first senior chief inspector and retired September 1, 1982.

Growth of the Division

In 1961, the division consisted of a division director, assistant division director, eight non-commissioned officers, eight patrolmen, and 77 civilian inspectors and operated 18 weigh stations and seven portable units throughout the state. By 1963, the division operated 20 weigh stations and nine portable units. By 1967, the division operated 26 weigh stations and 14 portable units and employed 149 civilian inspectors. In 1972, there were 37 weigh stations, 15 portable units, and 156 civilian inspectors.

On June 5, 1979, Governor Joseph P. Teasdale signed House Bill 454, creating commercial vehicle inspectors, with limited powers of arrest.

In March 1983, legislation became effective in giving the Patrol authority to enforce the Department of Transportation's Code of Federal Regulations regarding hazardous materials. On July 1, 1983, an officer assigned to the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division was designated a hazardous materials coordinator.

The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division began monitoring the shipments of radioactive materials on Missouri highways in 1985. Special equipment was purchased to do this work.

On June 12, 1994, Governor Mel Carnahan signed Senate Bill 475. This created commercial vehicle officers (CVOs). Qualified commercial vehicle inspectors, who successfully completed the required training, became commissioned CVOs and continued to enforce Missouri's commercial vehicle regulations. Senate Bill 475 allowed the newly created CVOs to carry a firearm and other defensive equipment. Nine CVO schools, which lasted six weeks, were held over a three-year-period for current employees. Current CVO schools last 12 weeks.

Not just weighing trucks anymore! The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division

The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division (CVED) has grown to enforce many additional state and federal rules and regulations. CVOs must know state laws as they pertain to: driver's licenses, fuel taxes, operating authority, motor vehicle inspection for trucks and buses, and many MODOT rules and regulations.

CVED participates in the federal Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, which is designed to reduce commercial motor vehicle-involved crashes, fatalities, and injuries. CVED's main role in this program is to conduct driver and vehicle inspections to ensure they are safe for the highways.

CVOs receive drug interdiction training and have helped with the seizure of many shipments of cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs over the years - some of these include:

- 1998 - CVO Steve Wilmesherr whose instincts led to the seizure of 1,819 pounds of marijuana, 1,467 pounds of cocaine, and 4.4 pounds of heroin—over $122 million in illegal drugs.
- 1999 - CVOs assisted in the seizure of 28,353 pounds of marijuana, 394 pounds of cocaine, three weapons, and $352,020 in cash.
- 2000 - CVO Sprv. I Thomas W. Cross, Troop I, was instrumental in the seizure of 1,394 pounds of cocaine at the Phelps County Sheriff's Department drug interdiction checkpoint.
- 2005 - Commercial Vehicle Officer Supervisor I J. David Brooks and Commercial Vehicle Officer II Ricky L. Talbert, both of Troop D, shared the 2005 Civilian of the Year Award for their success in drug interdiction; they were directly involved in 10 major drug interdictions, and responsible for seizing over 9,763 pounds of marijuana, 15 kilos of cocaine, and $70,000.

These are just a few of the times CVE employees have been directly responsible for drug interdiction arrests.

In 2005, CVED partnered with the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNOD) to establish a Preventative Radiological Nuclear Detection Program within the Patrol, enhancing the Patrol's radiation detection capabilities at the weigh stations, in the portable scale units, and (later) commercial vehicle enforcement trooper vehicles.

On December 1, 2006, the position of commercial vehicle enforcement trooper specialist became effective. Members holding this position formed teams of four. Their primary duty is commercial vehicle enforcement, using portable scale units and by inspecting vehicles, drivers, and cargo. They also have criminal investigation and homeland security duties. There are currently 28 commercial vehicle enforcement troopers statewide, assigned to the nine troop headquarters.

Effective August 2018, current commercial vehicle inspectors could be reclassified as commercial vehicle officers after successfully completing POST certification training. Ten commercial vehicle officers graduated with the 7th CVO Class on November 21, 2018.

In 2019, CVED graduated two classes of new CVOs. The 8th CVO Class, who already carried a post license, completed six weeks of training. The 9th CVO Class was comprised of 17 CVIs who were transitioned to CVOs. The class graduated in October 2019, after 17 weeks of POST training.

CVED completed two major construction projects in 2019. A new inspection building was completed at Post C5 South (Bloomsdale) located on Interstate 55 in Ste. Genevieve County. CVED also replaced the aging platform scale at Post E1 South on Interstate 57 in Mississippi County.

In 2020, CVED was able to graduate one new CVO class. The 10th CVO Class completed 21 weeks of training, and the class was comprised of six new hires and six CVI incumbents who were transitioned to CVOs. One major construction project was completed in 2020. CVED replaced the aging platform scale at Post E2 North on Interstate 55 in Pemiscot County. The new scale opened on January 14, 2020.

In 2021, CVED was able to graduate two CVO classes. The 11th CVO class completed 22 weeks of training and filled vacancies in Troops A and C. The 12th CVO Class completed 22 weeks of training and filled vacancies in Troops A and E. CVED added the position of CVE program specialist. This new position focuses on recruiting qualified applicants, education, and outreach. One major construction project was completed in 2021. CVED replaced the aging weigh station building and constructed a new inspection building at Post D4, located in Joplin. The new buildings opened in December 2021.

In 2022, CVED was able to graduate one new CVO classes. The 13th CVO class completed 22 weeks of training and filled vacancies in Troops B, C, D, E and F. One major construction project was completed in 2022. CVED completed a new inspection building at Post E2, located in Steele. The new buildings opened in November 2022.

In 2023, CVED was able to graduate two new CVO classes. The 14th and 15th CVO classes completed 23 weeks of training and filled vacancies in the various troops. Three major construction projects were completed in 2023. CVED completed scale replacements at A3W (Mayview), D4E (Joplin) and H2S (Eagleville).

In 2024, CVED retired one scale maintenance truck and replaced it with a new 2024 Freightliner. The truck is used to calibrate and test the scales at the 14 weigh stations the CVE Division currently operates.

One major construction project was started in 2024. C2W I-44 (St. Clair) was demolished and a new inspection building, scale building, and scale were constructed. The Missouri Department of Transportation also added a new concrete parking lot and extended the acceleration and deceleration ramps. The project was expected to be completed in late 2025.

CVED graduated two Commercial Vehicle Officer classes in 2024. The 16th CVO class graduated five officers in June 2024. The 17th CVO class graduated nine officers in October 2024. Both classes filled vacancies throughout the state.

In 2025, CVED conducted approximately 48,800 inspections and weighed approximately 719,000 commercial vehicles.

The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division graduated one Commercial Vehicle Officer classes in 2025. The 18th CVO class graduated three officers in May 2025.

The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division graduated the first ever Commercial Vehicle Officer Apprenticeship class. This structured on-the-job training was designed to prepare the new employee for full duties as a CVO. The class graduated in October 2025 with four new apprentices who work under the guidance of an experienced CVO.