



## Commercial Driver's License Changes Effective March 31, 2010

**I**n August 2009, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation, SB 931, that makes several changes to current commercial driver's license (CDL) statutes. New provisions provide that:



- **No employer shall knowingly allow, permit or authorize a driver to drive a commercial motor vehicle** during any period in which the **driver**, the **commercial vehicle being operated** or the **motor carrier operation**, is **subject to an out-of-service order**.

- North Carolina will now accept federally recognized CDLs for drivers of commercial motor vehicle
- Drivers who have previously lost their CDL and had it reinstated and are convicted of another major disqualifying offense may be **disqualified from driving a commercial motor vehicle in North Carolina for life**.

- **Drivers of a commercial motor vehicle** may be **subject to alcohol and drug testing** by the employer of a third-party administrator hired by the employer.

The full text of the bill can be found through the North Carolina General Assembly website: <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2009/Bills/Senate/PDF/S931v5.pdf>. □

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# Food Survey Serves Up Top Stories of 2009, Decade

When Americans were asked which were the most memorable food stories of 2009, **food health and safety** stories topped the list. The seventh annual year-end survey commissioned by Hunter Public Relations, a leading public relations firm specializing in the food and beverage industry, revealed the following as the three most memorable food-related stories of 2009:

## #1: Food Safety Concerns

The biggest food story of the year was the issue of **food safety**. From E. coli in ground beef to salmonella poisoning in nuts, thousands of Americans have been sickened, prompting **food recalls** of everything from baby food to green onions.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates **76 million cases of food borne illnesses** occur annually in the U.S.; more than **300,000 persons are hospitalized** and **5,000 die**.

## #2: Newly Poor Swelling the Lines at Food Banks

Stories related to the weak economy played a prominent role in 2009. The second biggest food story of the year was the **increase in demand at food banks**, with food pantries opening their doors to rapidly expanding numbers of hungry Americans.

- Feeding America, the nation's largest hunger-relief charity, reported that **requests for emergency food assistance rose by 30% in 2009**.

## #3: Consumers Cut Food Spending Sharply

The third biggest food story of 2009 was also related to the economy, as **Americans sharply curtailed spending on food by dining out less, opting for generic products over**

**Top 10 FOOD STORIES OF THE YEAR 2009**

1. Food Safety Concerns
2. Newly Poor Swell Lines at Food Banks
3. Consumers Cut Food Spending Sharply
4. Pork Industry Fights Concerns Over Swine Flu
5. 2 Million Enjoy Free Breakfast at Denny's
6. Health Experts Propose Soda Tax
7. Michelle Obama's Agenda Including Healthful Eating
8. Julia Child Biopic: Julie and Julia
9. President Obama Orders Burger with Spicy Mustard
10. Gourmet Magazine Goes Out of Print

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## brand names and choosing to cook at home more.

This has significantly hurt sales and profits at many food processors, grocery chains and restaurants.

- A HealthFocus International study indicated that nearly three-quarters of American shoppers showed a higher level of concern about the cost of groceries this year.

## Top Food Stories of the Decade

This decade has witnessed a dramatic transformation in the way Americans shop for, eat and think about food. When Americans were asked to recall the top food stories of the decade, **nutritional concerns** and **food safety** garnered the top spots. In the same survey, Americans voted the following as the three most memorable food-related stories of the decade:

## #1: Childhood obesity

With the number of obese schoolchildren continuing to grow year after year, childhood obesity became a major national concern. The FTC and the Department of Health and Human Services continue to urge food companies to develop products that are more nutritious and to review and revise their marketing practices.

- According to the CDC, **16% of American children -- over 9 million** -- are obese.

## #2: Mad Cow Disease

Americans felt that Mad Cow disease, which first hit the United Kingdom in 1993 and has infected over 189,000 cattle to date, was one of the most significant food stories of the decade. By October 2009, the human strain of the disease had killed 165 people in Britain and 44 elsewhere.

- Due to concerns that US livestock regulations lack sufficient rigor, 65 nations have implemented restrictions on importing US beef products.

## #3: Rise of Food Safety Concerns

In addition to being the top food story of 2009, food safety was also one of the biggest issues of the decade. Millions of consumers were sickened from E. coli or salmonella poisoning in their foods, and hundreds of worldwide recalls have been issued.

- This survey found that Americans over age 55 were far more likely than other age groups to select food safety as the most significant story of the decade. □

**Top 10 FOOD STORIES OF THE DECADE**

1. Childhood Obesity
2. Mad Cow Disease
3. Rise of Food Safety Concerns
4. China's Tainted Milk Scandal
5. Trans-Fat Revolution
6. Genetically Modified Foods
7. Organic Food Becomes Mainstream
8. Expansion of the Food Pyramid
9. Atkins Diet and the Low-Carb Craze
10. Nutraceuticals and Popularity of Herbs, Vitamins and Functional Foods

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**NOTICE**  
of  
**Special Meeting**  
of  
**The Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc.**  
**Tuesday, April 6, 2010**

In accordance with Article IV and Article XII of the Bylaws of the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc., be it known that a **Special Meeting** of the Members of the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc. has been scheduled for **8:00 am** on **Tuesday, April 6, 2010** at the offices of the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association located at **601 Saint Mary's Street, Raleigh, North Carolina, 27605**.

The purpose of this Special Meeting is to consider **proposed amendments** to the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation of the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc. These proposed amendments can be found at [www.ncrma.org](http://www.ncrma.org).

Members of the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc. may choose to attend this Special Meeting either in person or via conference call:

**(800) 377-8846, passcode: 071015#.**

This announcement shall satisfy the requirement of thirty (30) days written notice to Members of the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation, Inc.



# Economic Recovery Modest, but Steady

**I**n January, American personal income levels remained stagnant, however we spent more than economists had predicted. According to the US Department of Commerce, personal income increased only 0.1% in January, yet personal spending climbed by 0.5%. During the same period, the personal saving rate slowed to the smallest rate since 2008.

The manufacturing industry has seen seven straight months of growth. The Institute for Supply Management, a trade group of purchasing executives, said its manufacturing index read 56.5 last month; a reading of about 50 indicates expansion. Even hard-hit small businesses are beginning to report higher sales, indicating hopeful trends of economic recovery.

Current predictions estimate that North Carolina will be **\$500 million short** of its **\$19 billion budget** by the end of June. The severity of the total deficit depends upon April tax collections, which some fear could put the state in a deeper hole than originally predicted.

In North Carolina:

- **General Fund Revenues** are **\$35 million short** of an \$11 billion target for the first half of the fiscal year.
- **Sales tax collections** continue to be weak with these revenues running short of estimates by **4%**. The decline in sales tax collection is especially significant because the legislature added a penny to the sales tax, so it now represents a larger portion of the budget.
- **Income tax withholding** on wages and salaries are **down 4.7%** from last year, and **2.4% below a \$5 billion target** for the first seven months of the fiscal year.
- Almost **24,000 jobs (seasonally adjusted) have been lost** since the beginning of the fiscal year in July 2009. **Employment rates** are still **short** of pre-recession rates by **280,000 jobs**.
- **Personal income growth for 2010** is now forecasted to be **1.5%** in NC, down from a May 2009 forecast of 2.9%.

North and South Carolina are not alone in these bad economic times:

- **48 states** reported **year-over-year declines in state revenue collections**
- **22 states** reported **double-digit declines** in state revenue collections
- **40 states** forecast **lower revenues for Fiscal Year 2009-10** than 2008-09
- **9 states** project FY 2009-10 **budget gaps greater than 5%** □



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# North Carolina Workplace Fatalities Drop in 2009

## South Carolina's 2008 Rates See Decrease

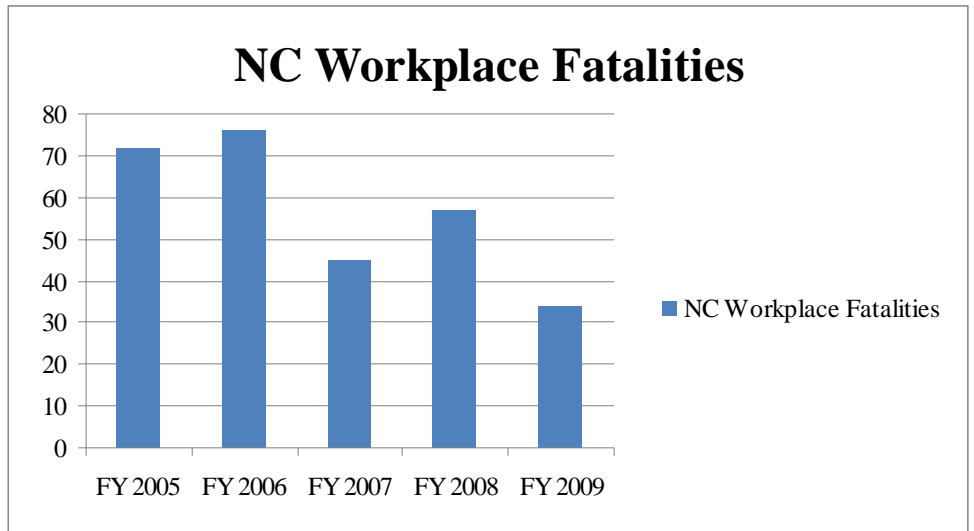
The North Carolina Department of Labor reports that accidental workplace fatalities dropped from 57 in 2008 to 34 in 2009, a 40% decrease. According to the South Carolina Department of Labor, the state recorded its lowest number of on-the-job fatalities in five years with 85 fatalities in 2008 (the last year on record).

“The good news is fewer people died on the job in 2009 than at any other time in our state’s history,” says Labor Commission Cherie Berry. One of North Carolina’s most hazardous industries, manufacturing, dropped from nine fatalities in 2009 to eight in 2009. Construction fatalities dropped from 17 in 2008 to 14 in 2009.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show private industry currently has a record low injury and illness rate in North Carolina – 3.4 injured workers for every 100 full-time employees in 2008. North Carolina’s injury and illness rate has steadily improved, breaking through the 4.0 ceiling that stood for 2005 and 2006 to fall to 3.7 in 2007 and to 3.4 in 2008. North Carolina is one of only 14 states with an injury and illness rate lower than the national average of 3.9 in 2008 (currently the last year of record).

Fatalities in the service industry, where retail is classified, dropped from eight fatalities in 2008 to six in 2009, and agriculture, forestry and fishing fatalities dropped from seven in 2008 to two in 2009.

Wake County, North Carolina experienced the most fatalities in the state with six, followed by Hyde County with four. Mecklenburg, Robeson and Rockingham counties each had two deaths and 18 counties experienced one fatality.

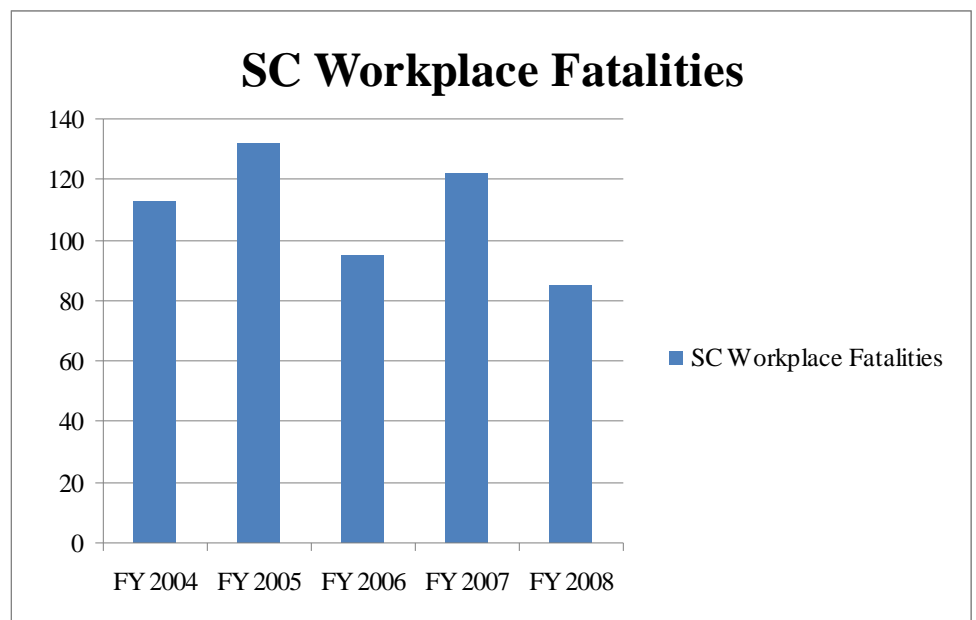


The leading causes of work-related fatalities in North Carolina were:

- Falls (9)
- Explosions (8)
- Crushed by objects (5)
- Struck by objects (5)
- Electrocutation (3)
- Other (4)

The leading causes of work-related fatalities in South Carolina were:

- Highway accidents (36)
- Assaults and violent acts (14)
- Worker contact with objects and equipment (12)
- Falls (911)
- Exposure to harmful substances or environments (11)



# OPINION EDITORIAL: Drunken Sailors

I don't want to offend any of my Navy friends (do I have any?) but one of the cliché's in life deals with what happens when a ship pulls into port after months at sea with hundreds, if not thousands, of bored sailors with money in their pockets and lust in their hearts. Something about women, liquor, and tattoos comes to mind. It must be true, I've seen it in the movies. Usually, the navy police end up rousting them from bars, loading them in jeeps and dumping those they catch in the brig.

Those that don't end up in the brig stagger back to the ship when the shore leave ends: broke, hung over, and a giant case of regret over behavior they wouldn't want their Mamas to ever know about.

Sound like any modern group we know? Ah, Congress. Their Mamas must be wondering, "what's got into my boy?", or girl as the modern situation warrants. But let's not focus on the liquor or the sex, **let's discuss this spending money** "like a drunken sailor" part. Not everyone is taking part in the other two, but by golly everyone gets in on the spending.

This is not a logo issue. Elephants and Donkeys are equally as bad. No group seems to be capable of restraining themselves. It's just not real money to them. It's like when you go to Vegas and you use chips instead of the real thing...red ones, black ones...would I really throw a hundred-dollar bill on the seven if I was using real money?

Let's be serious. When will our elected representatives stop this unfathomable deficit spending and start prioritizing our country's needs and making hard decisions? Earmarks aside, most of the deficit spending is for good and worthy projects and programs, but that doesn't mean we can afford them.

National discussions about priorities and spending are good and healthy. Spending money we don't have is irresponsible. How long will we allow Congress to keep this up? We're talking \$trillions now. Poor Senator Bunning caught national grief for holding up a reauthorization of extended unemployment benefits. All he asked was "how we gonna pay for it?" Ten billion dollars for a very worthy cause...but no accountability for where the money was coming from.

Does anyone really believe that we can add 30-50 million people to the publicly subsidized health insurance rolls without adding trillions to the national debt? Really? I'm not taking sides here. Our group insurance costs have doubled in the last five years... we need healthcare cost reform. But, let's be honest about the cost and where the money will come from.

It doesn't matter what political party we claim. We can have lively and constructive debates about public policy and the needs of our nation. What we cannot have is irresponsible deficit spending. Have the debate but make the spending revenue neutral. Cut something else, raise taxes...just don't continue to spend money we do not have. The voters will reward or punish those who serve us well or poorly.

Managing budgets is something we expect from families and businesses. The consequences for irresponsible spending is bankruptcy. What are the consequences for our federal government's deficit spending? We need to get our drunken sailors back on the ship...□

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<http://politicalcivility.wordpress.com>



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# NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Hosts Food Marketing Workshops

**T**urning a small or part-time value-added food business into a full-time business in a big step, but a new marketing series is designed to help food entrepreneurs decide if it is a move that makes sense for their business.



“Food Marketing in the Real World” will take place April 20, “Making Media Work for Your Food Business” will be held August 10, and the “The Secrets to Marketing and Selling Success” will be held November 16.

Workshops will cover a variety of topics, including creating a competitive advantage, understanding the difference between sales and marketing, knowing when to make the move from part-time to professional, marketing to food service and retail, and understanding the financial considerations of expanding a business.

About the workshops:

**Cost:** \$30, which covers materials and lunch

**Time:** 8:30 am to 4:15 pm

**Location:** Western NC Ag Center in Fletcher, North Carolina

**Registration Begins:**

February 1 for

April 20 workshop

July 6 for

August 10 workshop

October 11 for

November 16 workshop

**Registration Ends:**

One week prior to event date.

Register early as space is limited to 40 people

**To Register:**

Visit [www.ncagr.gov/markets/agbizmarketing.htm](http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/agbizmarketing.htm) or call Annette Dunlap at 919-733-7887

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