

Update DOT / MEC

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U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

- The FMCSA was established as a separate administration within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) on January 1, 2000, pursuant to the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999. FMCSA is headquartered in Washington, DC and employs more than 1,000 people in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, all dedicated to improving the safety of commercial motor vehicles (CMV) and saving lives.

Mission of FMCSA

The primary mission of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses.

Medical Program

The mission of the FMCSA Medical Program is to promote the safety of America's roadways through the publication and implementation of medical regulations, policies and standards **that ensure commercial motor vehicle drivers engaged in interstate commerce are physically qualified to do so.**

FMCSA Medical Programs

- ensure commercial motor vehicle drivers engaged in interstate commerce are physically qualified to do so.

National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (NRCME)

Medical Examiners

- Medical examiners would be required to maintain competency through training and recertification.
- Certification and recertification tests would measure the medical examiner's knowledge and assessment skills required to determine if a driver can safely handle the mental and physical demands of driving a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) according to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration medical standards.
- The names of medical examiners who have successfully met the knowledge and skills requirements for certification or recertification would be placed on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (NRCME), which would provide a convenient vehicle to make certified medical examiners available to motor carriers and CMV drivers.
- Additional information and updates for medical examiners will be posted as they become available.
- To Receive updates and information about FMCSA medical programs such as the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners and the Medical Review Board. [Sign up for the NRCME Listserv](#)

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Medical Examiner Handbook

- This handbook provides information and guidance to the medical examiner who performs the commercial driver medical examination. **Determining driver medical fitness for duty is a critical element of the FMCSA safety program.** Specialists, such as cardiologists and endocrinologists, may perform additional medical evaluation.

BUT IT IS

The Medical Examiner
who decides if the driver
is medically qualified to
drive.

Medical Review Board

The Medical Review Board (MRB)

- A nationally recognized standing board of licensed physicians established by FMCSA to provide expert advice to the Secretary of Transportation on matters related to physical qualifications of drivers, medical standards and guidelines.
- Materials for training medical examiners.
- Functional tests for drivers with multiple disabilities and identifying risks of sudden incapacitation.

Medical Review Board

For more information or apply to serve on the Medical Review Board (MRB).

Contact MRB staff at

(202) 366-4001

or

fmcsamrb@fmcsa.dot.gov

Medical Expert Panels



- The FMCSA Medical Program has established Medical Expert Panels to assist the Agency with its goal to update current, and develop new, medical fitness for duty standards and guidelines for drivers of CMVs who operate in interstate commerce.
- The FMCSA Medical Panel is comprised of experienced clinicians and researchers knowledgeable in evidence-based medicine. The team conducts background and preliminary research on relevant medical issues, conducts systematic reviews of the medical literature, and performs meta-analyses using quantitative and qualitative models to develop evidence-based recommendations.

Medical Expert Panels

- Each MEP is comprised of an independent panel of physicians, clinicians, and scientists who are experts in their specialty fields. The MEP reviews the evidence in the research report about a question or topic, and makes recommendations to the Agency in the form of a report. A MEP representative may present their recommendations at a public forum such as the deliberation of FMCSA's Medical Review Board.
- Executive summaries of evidence reports and MEP recommendation reports are posted on this site. Comprehensive evidence reports can be reviewed at the National Transportation Library Web site:
<http://ntl.bts.gov>

Medical Expert Panels

- For more information about FMCSA's Medical Program, go to:
<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/medical.htm>
- For questions about FMCSA's Medical Program, email
FMCSAMedical@dot.gov

Reports

- How Medical Conditions Impact Driving-

Two reports are available.

- The first is an executive summary report that includes a systematic review of the research literature on specific questions regarding medical conditions and driving.
- The second report **is the expert recommendations based on the evidence.**

- Diabetes Mellitus (Endocrine Disease) 2006 [PDF](#)
- Schedule II Licit Medications 2006 [PDF](#)
- Cardiovascular Disease 2006 [PDF](#)
- Seizure Disorders 2007 [PDF](#)
- Sleep Disorders 2007 [PDF](#)
- Renal Disease 2007 [PDF](#)
- Vision 2007 [PDF](#)
- Musculoskeletal Disease 2007 [PDF](#)
- Hearing 2007 [PDF](#)
- In Progress Psychiatric Disease 2008 [PDF](#)
- In Progress Substance Abuse 2008 [PDF](#)
- In Progress In Progress Stroke 2009 [PDF](#)
- In Progress Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease 2009 [PDF](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

What medical conditions disqualify a commercial bus or truck driver? The truck driver must be medically qualified to not only drive the vehicle safely, but also to do pre and post trip safety inspections, secure the load and make sure it has not shifted. Bus drivers have different demands. **By regulation, Specific Medically Disqualifying Conditions Found Under 49 CFR 391.41 are Hearing Loss, Vision Loss, Epilepsy and Insulin Use.** Drivers who require a **Diabetes or Vision exemption** to safely drive a CMV in addition to those pre-printed on the certification form are disqualified until they receive such an exemption.

Federal Vision Exemption Program

The [FMCSA Vision Exemption Program](#) is for monocular vision. The vision exemption is issued for a maximum of 2 years and is renewable.

The driver must be otherwise qualified under 49 CFR 391.41(b)(1-13) or hold another valid medical exemption to legally operate a commercial motor vehicle in interstate commerce. [Provisions of the vision exemption include an annual medical examination and an eye examination by an ophthalmologist or an optometrist.](#)

At the annual recertification examination, the driver should present the current vision exemption and a copy of the specialist eye examination report. [Certify the qualified driver for 1 year and issue a medical examiner's certificate with the "accompanied by" exemption checkbox marked and write "vision" to identify the type of Federal exemption.](#)

Driver Exemption Programs

Driver Exemption Programs

(Diabetes, Vision)

email: medicalexemptions@dot.gov

More information call (703) 448-3094

CERTIFYING MEDICAL EXAMINER EVALUATION GUIDELINES FEDERAL DIABETES EXEMPTION PROGRAM

- The applicant is applying for a Federal diabetes exemption to allow insulin use while operating a commercial motor vehicle (large truck or bus) in interstate commerce. Effective July 15, 2007, the driver is required to be examined by a medical examiner as part of the application process.
- This change will assist the Agency in determining that the individual is qualified for all medical standards, other than diabetes, in accordance with 49 CFR 391.41(b); expedite the application process; and make the process consistent with other medical exemption and certificate programs, including the Skill Performance Evaluation program.
- This examination begins the exemption process. The certifying medical examiner must review the applicant's 5 year medical history and provide the applicant with a completed U.S. Department of Transportation medical examination report and medical examiner's certificate. The applicant is responsible to submit copies of these forms with their application. The form and certificate are not valid until Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has issued an insulin exemption. Any other medical problem or condition that prevents being certified by the medical examiner must be corrected **BEFORE** the rest of this application is completed.
- **IT IS THE EXAMINER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE IF THE APPLICANT MEETS ALL MEDICAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES, OTHER THAN DIABETES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 49 CFR 391.41 (B) (1-13). IF THE APPLICANT PASSES THE CERTIFICATION EXCEPT FOR USING INSULIN:**

GUIDELINES FEDERAL DIABETES EXEMPTION PROGRAM

Check the following on the Medical Examination Report:

- meets standards but periodic evaluation required due to “**insulin use**” driver qualified only for (**check the 1 year box**)
-
- **accompanied by** a “**Federal diabetes**” waiver/exemption

Check the following on the Medical Examiner’s Certificate:

- **accompanied** by a “**Federal diabetes**” waiver/exemption
- Medical examination expiration date should be **one year** from the date of examination.
- **The applicant is required to submit copies** of the Medical Examination Report and Medical Examiner’s Certificate along with the endocrinologist and the ophthalmologist/optometrist evaluation checklists, to be reviewed by FMCSA for the determination of qualification for the Federal diabetes exemption.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **How long will it take the agency to respond to a driver request for a waiver?** The agency will issue a final decision **within 180 days** of the date it receives a completed application. However, if any information is left out which is required information, it takes longer to complete the application.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **May a driver who has non-insulin treated diabetes mellitus (treated with oral medication) be certified for 2 years?** In all cases, clinical judgment is required.
- The Medical Examiner decides if the driver's diabetes is adequately controlled, which determines certification, length of certification or disqualification.
- FMCSA guidelines recommend performing annual examination for vision, neurological function and cardiovascular disease, including hypertension.
- In general, the diabetic driver should have annual re-certification examinations.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Can a CMV driver be disqualified for using a legally prescribed drug?**
- Although the driver has a legal prescription, he/she **may be disqualified if the medication could adversely affect the driver's ability to drive a CMV safely.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Can a driver be qualified if taking prescribed medical marijuana?**

No! Drivers taking medical marijuana cannot be certified.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Can a CMV driver be disqualified for using a legally prescribed drug?**
- Although the driver has a legal prescription, he/she may be disqualified if the medication could adversely affect the driver's ability **to drive a CMV safely.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Can a driver be certified who tests positive for a controlled substance on the urine test, but claims that the prescription was legally prescribed 5 years before?**
- **No!** Controlled substances expire no later than one year after the date of the original prescription.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - Medical

- **Can a driver be qualified if he is taking Methadone?**
- **No!** CMV drivers taking Methadone cannot be qualified.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) - Medical

- **So what medications disqualify a CMV driver?**
- A driver cannot take a controlled substance or prescription medication without a prescription from a licensed practitioner. **If a driver uses a drug identified in 21 CFR 1308.11 (391.42(b)(12) or any other substance such as amphetamine, a narcotic, or any other habit forming drug, The driver is medically unqualified.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- There is an exception: the prescribing doctor can write that the driver is safe to be a commercial driver while taking the medication. In this case, the Medical Examiner may, but does not have to certify the driver.
- Any anti-seizure medication used for the prevention of seizures is disqualifying.
- Methadone use again is disqualifying.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Waiver if driver history had a single unprovoked seizure?**
- Drivers who have had one unprovoked seizure by definition do not have epilepsy must have (2 or more unprovoked seizures). Drivers who are seizure-free and off anticonvulsant medication's for at least 5 years after a single unprovoked seizure can be certified. Earlier return to work may be considered for drivers with a normal EEG who have no epileptic-form activity and normal examination by a neurologist specializing in epilepsy.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Obtaining an application for an epilepsy waiver?**
- **A CMV driver may apply for an exemption from any of the standards.** Exemptions are granted only in those instances where the driver can show that safety would not be diminished by granting the exemption.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **What is a waiver?** A waiver is temporary regulatory relief from one or more of the FMCSRs given to a person subject to the regulations, or a person who intends to engage in an activity that would be subject to the regulations. **A waiver provides the person with relief from the regulation for up to three months.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **What An exemption?**
- An exemption is a temporary regulatory relief from one or more of the FMCSRs given to a person or class of persons subject to the regulations, or who intend to engage in an activity that would make them subject to the regulation. **An exemption provides the person or class of persons with relief from the regulations for up to two years**, but may be renewed

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Who can give a waiver or exemption?**
- The Medical Examiner cannot grant waivers or exemptions.
- Only the FMCSA grants waivers or exemptions for certain medical conditions **if the individual is otherwise qualified to drive.**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Can a driver receive a hearing waiver?**
- Currently, there is no waiver program for hearing.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **What are the hearing requirements for CMV drivers?** A person is physically qualified to drive a CMV if that person: **First perceives a forced whispered voice in the better ear at not less than five feet with or without the use of a hearing aid or if tested by use of an audiometric device, does not have an average hearing loss in the better ear greater than 40 decibels at 500Hz, 1000HZ and 2,000 Hz with or without a hearing aid when the audiometric device is calibrated to the American National Standard Z24.5-1951**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Is Meniere's Disease disqualifying?**
Meniere's Disease – a condition associated with severe and unpredictable bouts of dizziness (vertigo) **is disqualifying**. This recommendation can be found in the Conference on Neurological Disorders and Commercial Drivers.
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- **If a driver has had surgery for Meniere's Disease, is the condition disqualifying?**
- There is surgery for Meniere's Disease. **The FMCSA is now reviewing this issue in relation to certification.**

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Safety Administration (FMCSA) recently proposed updates to existing guidelines regarding compliance with medical fitness standards related directly and indirectly to respiratory dysfunctions, including sleep apnea.

The guidelines for physical qualifications related to respiratory dysfunction for drivers state that: " a person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) if that person has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with his/her ability to control and drive a commercial motor vehicle safely...

If the medical examiner detects a respiratory dysfunction that in anyway is likely to interfere with the driver's ability to safely control and drive a commercial motor vehicle, the driver must be referred to a specialist for further evaluation and therapy."

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

A research study on sleep apnea sponsored by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the American Transportation Research Institute of the American Trucking Associations (ATA) found that 28.1 percent of those studied, holding a commercial driver's license, had some form of sleep apnea.¹

The most common form of sleep apnea is known as **Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)**. OSA is a serious sleep breathing disorder that can affect your driver's health and negatively impact the safety, productivity, and health and liability premiums of your drivers and your company.

Along with negatively impacting driver safety, sleep apnea is associated with other diseases and disorders such as:

- Type II diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease

Facts about drivers treated for sleep apnea

Study indicated that drivers who were treated for sleep apnea showed a:

- **73% reduction in preventable driving accidents**
- **48% reduction in annual health care costs**
- **Retention rate 2.29 times greater than company-wide driver retention rates**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- **Is Sleep Apnea disqualifying?**
- Drivers **should be disqualified** until the diagnosis of sleep apnea has been ruled out or has been treated successfully.
- As a condition of continuing qualification, it is recommended that a CMV driver agree to continue uninterrupted therapy such as CPAP, etc. / monitoring and undergo objective testing as required.
- A driver with a diagnosis of (probable) sleep apnea or a driver who has **Excessive Daytime Somnolence (EDS)** **should be temporarily disqualified** until the condition is either ruled out by objective testing or successfully treated.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

- Narcolepsy and sleep apnea account for about 70% of EDS. EDS lasting from a few days to a few weeks should not limit a driver's ability in the long run. However, persistent or chronic sleep disorders causing EDS can be a significant risk to the driver and the public. The examiner should consider general certification criteria at the initial and follow-up examinations:
 - Severity and frequency of EDS
 - Presence or absence of warning of attacks
 - Possibility of sleep during driving
 - Degree of symptomatic relief with treatment
 - Compliance with treatment.

Resource

- **1** Pack, Al et al. *A Study of Prevalence of Sleep Apnea Among Commercial Truck Drivers. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Publication NO. DOT-RT-02-030, Washington, DC 20002.*
- **2** Berger, et al. *A Corporate Driven Sleep Apnea Detection and Treatment Program: Results and Challenges, 2007.*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Medical

If a medical certificate is still valid. Is the driver prohibited from operating a CMV if a medical condition developed after the driver last medical certificate was issued?

- FMCSA regulations prohibit a driver from beginning or continuing to drive if their ability and/or alertness is impaired by: fatigue, illness, or any cause that makes it unsafe to begin (continue) to drive a commercial vehicle.
- Even if a driver currently has a valid medical certificate, the driver is prohibited from driving a CMV with any medical condition that would be disqualifying or may interfere with the safe operation of a CMV.
- Once a disqualifying medical condition is resolved, and before resuming operation of CMVs, a driver is responsible for obtaining re-certification from a Medical Examiner. 391.45

Contacts available on web

- Office of Medical Programs
 - email: fmcsamedical@dot.gov
 - (202) 366-4001
- [FMCSA Headquarters](#)
- [FMCSA Field Offices](#)
- [Driver Exemption Programs](#) (Diabetes, Vision)
 - email: medicalexemptions@dot.gov
 - (703) 448-3094
- [Medical Review Board \(MRB\)](#)
 - Click here to [contact the MRB](#)
 - (703) 998-0189 ext. 237
- Proposed [National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners \(NRCME\)](#)
 - Click here to [contact the NRCME](#)

Links to FMCSA Web Site available

- [Medical Program Page](#)
- [Rules & Regulations](#)
- [49 CFR 390.5 Definitions](#)
- [49 CFR 391.41 Physical qualifications for drivers](#)
- [49 CFR 391.43 Medical examination; certificate of physical examination](#)
- [Medical Examination Form \(PDF\)](#)

Any Questions?

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