



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
www.dot.gov/briefing-room.html

News

FMCSA 07-12

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

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U.S. Department of Transportation Raises the Bar for Safety with National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners Final Rule

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced an important new safety rule that requires healthcare professionals, who perform medical examinations for interstate truck and bus drivers, to be trained, tested and certified on the specific physical qualifications that affect a driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle. The final rule also creates a national online database of medical examiners that have completed the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) certification process.

"Safety is our top priority," said Secretary Ray LaHood. "This new rule will ensure that healthcare professionals conducting Department of Transportation medical exams fully understand all of the demands required to operate large trucks and passenger buses safely."

FMCSA developed the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners final rule as part of the agency's commitment to enhancing the medical oversight of interstate drivers, and preventing commercial vehicle-related crashes, injuries and fatalities. This rule addresses four National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations on comprehensive training for medical examiners, and tracking of driver medical certificates.

In 30 days, FMCSA will post its uniform training and testing standards for medical examiners at <http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/>. At that time, health care professionals, drivers, employers, law enforcement officers and the public can review the training standards and sign up to receive updates on the implementation of the rule.

By May 21, 2014, all certified medical examiners must be on the National Registry database, and drivers must obtain a medical examination from a certified examiner. Medical examiners who fail to maintain federal standards will be removed from the registry.

To allow time for testing and training centers to prepare their curricula and receive FMCSA approval, healthcare professionals seeking to become certified examiners will begin registering on the National Registry website this summer.

“Truck and bus drivers deserve highly-trained medical examiners that think safety first,” said FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro. “By holding medical examiners accountable to high standards of practice, we raise the bar for safety and save lives through increased commercial driver and vehicle safety.”

Medical examiners perform approximately three million examinations on commercial truck and bus drivers each year. A Department of Transportation medical exam looks at a range of conditions to determine a driver’s medical fitness, including cardiovascular disease, respiratory and muscular functions, vision and hearing.

All commercial drivers must pass a Department of Transportation medical examination at least every two years in order to obtain a valid medical certificate, maintain their commercial driver’s license and legally drive a commercial motor vehicle.

To learn more about the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners final rule, visit <http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/>.

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