Department of Transportation (DOT) Changes

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION CHANGES

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Starting May 2014, doctors need to take a class, pass a test and register with the Department of Transportation to do DOT physical exams.

How will this change affect me?

- It could take longer to get an appointment for a DOT exam. Many doctors (including many family doctors) who used to do DOT exams will no longer do them. Please make your appointment a few weeks in advance with the department of occupational medicine.
- There are many medical conditions that can disqualify people from driving. There are also recommendations for additional testing and limiting how long a certification is valid for drivers with certain risk factors or conditions. Most of the recommendations, restrictions and requirements are not new, but not all doctors knew about them. Now, all doctors who do DOT exams will know the rules and recommendations.
- If you are healthy, you may pass the DOT exam as usual. What is healthy? Good vision in both eyes, no problems hearing, normal blood pressure, no chronic diseases, and with no risk factors for developing something that could interfere with safe with safe driving. Allow extra time to get an appointment and know that you may have additional requirements to make sure your DOT certification is registered and up to date.
- If you have health problems, sleep apnea, poor vision or hearing, or risk factors for developing certain diseases, you may need to:
  - » Have extra medical tests
  - » Provide records from your doctor
  - » Be treated and go through a waiting period before driving
- The doctor who does your DOT exam may ask more questions, collect more medical records, and tell you to have additional tests if there is any doubt that you can drive safely.
- You may need to show proof that your treatment is working. This is especially true for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and sleep apnea. You could be asked to provide lab results, blood sugar monitoring records, stress test results and echocardiogram reports, blood pressure tests, sleep studies and records form recording CPAP or BiPAP machines. If you do not have test results available, you might not be able to get your DOT certification. There is no plan to have these tests paid for if you do not have insurance to cover them.
- It will be important to know whether you are driving “intrastate” or “interstate.”
- There are many conditions and diseases of the heart, arteries, brain, nerves, lungs, kidneys, blood and other organs that are considered too high-risk for commercial drivers. They are noted in the Physical Requirements information.

General statements

If you have any medical condition(s) please provide documentation to your DOT examiner that confirms your diagnosis and demonstrates your treatment to be adequate, effective, stable and safe. Any driver with a deficit that requires special evaluation and screening should have annual recertification. The conditions below are just a partial summary of some of the more common conditions which may require further testing and treatment before a driver can be certified. This is not an all-inclusive list and depending on the condition, your examiner may make referrals to a specialist or require further testing for certification.

Definitions

Waiting Period: The minimum time after onset of a condition a driver must wait before being eligible to apply or re-apply for certification.

Certification Period: The length of time a medical examiner certifies that a driver is qualified to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV). Can vary in length of time, but cannot exceed 2 years.

Waiver: A waiver is temporary regulatory relief from one or more of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (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.

Federal Exemption: An exemption is a temporary regulatory relief from one of 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.

SPE Certificate: Skills performance evaluation. See http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/spepackage.htm

Health History and Physical: The process by which a driver is determined to be qualified for certification. This includes a full health history and examination by a licensed provider who understands the functions and demands of commercial driving and is certified by the DOT.

Disqualification: A condition or situation in which a driver is not qualified for certification or recertification.

Physical requirements

There are 4 non-discretionary DOT federal/state standards:

Vision

- Corrected or uncorrected vision 20/40 in each eye and both eyes
- Monocular vision requires a federal waiver/exemption. When vision requirements are met in only 1 eye (with or without correction) a waiver/exemption is required. See: http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/exemptions.html
- Color blindness for traffic signals
- Peripheral vision 70 degrees or better

Hearing

- Qualified drivers must be able to hear a forced whisper voice in better ear from not less than 5 feet with or without hearing aids
- If driver fails whisper test, an audiometric test will be performed and hearing loss in better ear may not exceed 40 decibels
- Hearing loss in both ears over 40 decibels requires a waiver

Diabetes Mellitus

- May be qualified up to 1 year
- Use of insulin will require a waiver. See: http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/exemptions.htm

Epilepsy

- Driver is disqualified if there is a clinical diagnosis or medical history of epilepsy or any other condition which may result in loss of consciousness or loss of ability to control a motor vehicle
- Waiver may be available for drivers with a history of epilepsy/seizures off antiseizure medication and seizure-free for 10 years

Cardiovascular conditions

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Anticoagulation therapy (Blood thinners)	***A*** • Monthly INR results	1 month	1 month
Pulmonary emboli	***A*** • Monthly INR if taking blood thinners	3 months	1 year
ICD/defibrillator/ implantable cardioverter			Disqualify
Pacemaker	***A, B*** • Provide documentation of pacemaker function • Monthly INR if taking blood thinners	1 to 3 months	1 year
Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)	***A*** • Monthly INR report		1 year
Ventricular arrhythmia	***A*** • Annual clearance from cardiologist • Echocardiogram or exercise tolerance test	1 month	1 year
Myocardial infarction (Heart attack)	***A, B*** • Biennial stress test	2 months	1 year
Coronary artery bypass graft ***Initial***	***A, B*** • Echocardiogram	3 months	1 year
Coronary artery bypass graft ***5 years postsurgery***	***B*** • Annual stress test	N/A	1 year
Heart failure	***A*** • Annual clearance from cardiologist • Stress test, echocardiogram or Holter monitoring	None	1 year
Angioplasty or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) ***3 to 6 months postsurgery***	***A, B*** • ECG	1 to 3 months	Initial certification up to 6 months

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective

B — Clearance from a cardiologist or cardiovascular specialist who understands the functions and demands of commercial driving

Cardiovascular conditions (*continued*)

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Angioplasty or PCI ***6 months postcertification***	Stress test		1 year
Angioplasty or PCI ***1 year postcertification***	***B*** • Biennial stress test		1 year
Hypertension (High blood pressure)	• To maintain continuous certification, the driver must demonstrate at examination blood pressure at or less than 140/90	Varies	3 months to 1 year
Aortic regurgitation or insufficiency (mild or moderate)	***A*** • Echocardiogram every 2 to 3 years		1 year
Aortic regurgitation or insufficiency (severe)	***A, B*** • Echocardiogram every 4 to 12 months	3 months post valve repair if applicable	6 months without surgery; 1 year if surgically repaired
Aortic stenosis	***A, B*** • Echocardiogram **every 5 years for mild aortic stenosis and every 1 to 2 years for moderate aortic stenosis**	3 months postsurgery	1 year
Mitral regurgitation	***A, B*** • Annual echocardiogram	3 months if surgery is required	1 year
Mitral stenosis	***A, B*** • Chest X-ray • ECG • Two-dimensional echocardiography	4 weeks post-angioplasty 3 months post valve surgery	1 year
Prosthetic valves	***A, B*** • Monthly INR if taking blood thinners • Possible echocardiogram or stress test	3 months	1 year

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective

B — Clearance from a cardiologist or cardiovascular specialist who understands the functions and demands of commercial driving

Respiratory conditions

Note: Current guidelines recommend spirometry (breathing capacity test) be performed on all smokers over age 35.

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Asthma	***A*** • May require PFT	None	2 years
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	***A*** • Lung function test may be required	None	2 years
Obstructive sleep apnea	***A*** • CPAP • Annual testing	1 month after starting CPAP. 3 months symptom-free after surgical treatment	1 year
Pneumothorax	• Chest X-ray indicating complete recovery	After chest X-ray indicates complete recovery	2 years

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective

Neurological conditions

- Use of anticoagulation (such as Coumadin) for an underlying cerebrovascular disorder is disqualifying.
- A current diagnosis of epilepsy or use of anticonvulsant medication to prevent or control seizures is disqualifying.
- Drivers with a history of epilepsy/seizures who are off seizure medication and seizure-free for 10 years MAY be qualified to drive.

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Acute seizure secondary to trauma or structural insult (stroke)	***A, B*** • Normal neuro-opthalmological evaluation • Normal neuro-psychological test	Seizure-free and off anticonvulsant medication for 1 to 5 years	2 years
Acute seizure secondary to metabolic illness	***A***	None	2 years
Febrile seizure	***A***	None	2 years
Epilepsy (history, not current diagnosis)	***A, B***	10 years seizure-free without anticonvulsant medication	1 year
Benign postural vertigo	***A***	2 months symptom-free	1 to 2 years
Infections of central nervous system	***A***	0 to 10 years	2 years
Central nervous system tumors	***A*** • Evaluation by neurologist or physiatrist	1 to 2 years postsurgery and off anticonvulsant medications (seizure guidelines apply)	1 year

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective.

B — Clearance from a neurologist who understands the function and demands of commercial driving.

Neurological conditions (*continued*)

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Neuromuscular diseases	***A*** • Examination by neurologist or physiatrist • Specialist may recommend a simulated skills driving test or equivalent functional test	None	1 to 2 years
Embolic and thrombotic strokes	***A, B*** • Normal neuro-opthalmological evaluation and normal neuropsychological testing	1 year if not at risk for seizure; 5 years if at risk for seizure	1 year
Intracerebral and subarachnoid hemorrhage	***A, B*** • Normal neuro-opthalmological evaluation and normal neuropsychological testing	1 year if not at risk for seizure; 5 years if at risk for seizure	1 year
Transient ischemic attack (TIA)	***A, B*** • Normal neuro-opthalmological evaluation and normal neuropsychological testing	1 year	1 year
Traumatic brain injury	***A, B*** • Normal neuro-opthalmological evaluation and normal neuropsychological testing	2 to 5 years seizure-free and off anticonvulsant medication	1 year

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective.

B — Clearance from a neurologist who understands the function and demands of commercial driving.

Diabetes

- The diabetes qualification standard parameter is the use of insulin.
- Drivers with a federal diabetes exemption must follow the program guidelines for blood glucose monitoring which include:
  - » Using a device that records blood glucose results for later review
  - » And the driver must also measure his/her blood glucose before driving AND every 2 to 4 hours while driving.

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Diabetes mellitus *Non-insulin dependant*	***A*** • A driver taking an incretin mimetic must provide a written statement from the treating health care provider that includes (1) driver tolerance to the medication (2) how frequently driver is monitored for adequate blood glucose • Hemoglobin A1C • Finger stick	None	1 to 2 years
Diabetes mellitus *Insulin dependant*	***A*** • Certifiable only with federal diabetes exemption http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/medical/exemptions.htm • Annual requirements: » DOT exam; endocrinologist evaluation; monitoring blood glucose. » Driver must provide a quarterly evaluation checklist from his/her endocrinologist throughout the 2-year period or risk losing exemption. » Must provide 5-year medical history to examining provider. » Drivers with a diabetes exemption must carry a source of rapidly absorbable glucose while driving.		1 year

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective.

Mental health conditions

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
First generation anti-depressant use (Elavil, amitriptyline, Tofranil, imipramine)			Disqualify
Anti-psychotic therapy and 2nd generation antidepressants	***A, B*** • Complete treatment program • Clearance from mental health professional every 2 years	None	1 year
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	***A*** • If using central nervous system stimulant medication, must have evaluation from the treating provider • Verification of diagnosis of adult ADHD • May require additional test or consultation with mental health specialist	None	1 year
Narcolepsy			Disqualify
Lithium therapy	***A*** • Lithium levels in therapeutic range	None	1 year

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective.

B — Comprehensive evaluation from appropriate mental health professional who understands the function and demands of commercial driving.

Mental health conditions (*continued*)

Condition	Documentation	Waiting Period	Certification Period
Bipolar mood disorder	***A, B***	6 month minimum symptom-free following nonpsychotic major depression accompanied by suicidal behavior 1 year minimum symptom-free following a severe depressive episode, a suicide attempt or a manic episode	1 year
Major depression	***A, B*** • Clearance from mental health professional every 2 years	Minimum 6 months	1 year
Personality disorders	***A, B*** • Clearance from mental health professional every 2 years		1 year
Chronic schizophrenia			Disqualify

A — Minimum documentation must confirm the etiology of medical condition and indicate adequate treatment that is safe and effective.

B — Comprehensive evaluation from appropriate mental health professional who understands the function and demands of commercial driving.