

Here's a quick FAQ based on the Federal rule that merges CDL and medical certification:

Q. What is the CDL and Medical merger rule?

A. FMCSA published a Final Rule which merges medical certification information into interstate CDL holders license record. Eventually, the merged CDL/medical record will replace the need for a separate paper medical certificate to be carried by drivers. The rule will serve to restrict medically unqualified drivers from operating by linking medical qualification to CDL status.

Q. When does the rule take effect?

A. Starting January 30, 2012, new CDL applicants or persons renewing their CDL will need to certify their medical certification status, and present their medical certificate to the licensing agency (the DMV will keep a copy). Current CDL holders will need to submit a copy of their first new medical certificates obtained after January 30, 2012 to their state licensing agency, so all drivers should have submitted medical certification by no later than January 30, 2014.

Q. Who must comply with the rule?

A. CDL drivers operating in interstate commerce (and CDL holders driving in intrastate commerce subject to medical requirements under state laws) are subject to the rule. There are a few exceptions, drivers who meet exception criteria will need to certify with the state. Additionally, there are some states that do not require drivers engaged in intrastate commerce to be medically certified.

Q. Will drivers still have to carry a medical certificate while operating a commercial motor vehicle?

A. Yes. The original Final Rule indicates that once a driver has submitted their medical certificate to a state licensing agency, they'd no longer need to retain a hardcopy of their medical certificate. However, FMCSA published a new Final Rule effective December 15, 2011 that extends the requirement for drivers to carry the paper medical certificate through January 30, 2014. This extension of the paper medical requirement will give states additional time to make the computer system and process changes to record medical certification information on driver CDL records.

Q. Must a motor carrier continue to retain a copy of driver medical certificates in the driver qualification file?

A. Yes. The original Final Rule indicated that a motor carrier would comply with medical certification requirements by obtaining a CDL record indicating the valid medical qualification status of the driver. However, FMCSA published a Final Rule effective December 15, 2011 that indicates that if a driver's license record does not contain a medical certification indicator, then a motor carrier must retain a copy of the medical examination certificate.

Q. What will occur if a driver fails to provide a copy of a medical examination to the state licensing agency?

A. States will place an indicator of the lack of medical certification on the driver's license record on the 10th day after they've not received an updated medical, and must within 60 days downgrade the CDL, or apply a special restriction (ex- intrastate only in those states that permit intrastate drivers to operate without medical certification). Some states may set tighter deadlines than those required by FMCSA, and some states may elect to cancel a driver's entire driving license, not just CDL privileges.

Q. How will roadside inspectors verify a driver's medical certification status?

A. Roadside officers will have access to a medical certification status indicator when they run a driver's license record. Additionally, the new Final Rule extends the requirement for drivers to continue to carry a paper medical certificate until January 30, 2014.

Q. Does this rule change any of the medical certification standards?

A. No- while FMCSA is examining updates to the medical certification criteria, this merger of the medical certification with driver CDL records does not change any of the current standards except recordkeeping requirements.