

Medical card/CDL merger rule

The Medical Card/CDL Merger Rule, as published on [December 1, 2008](#), will ultimately result in a variety of changes to the medical qualification and commercial driver's licensing process between now and January 30, 2014.

The final rule from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) requires states to begin placing each interstate drivers' medical qualification status into the national commercial driver's license (CDL) database. In practical terms, this means:

- An interstate commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver who is required to hold a CDL will have to provide each of his/her medical certificates (wallet cards) and any applicable variances/exemptions to the state that issued the CDL. The expiration date of the certificate is then placed in the CDL database for tracking by the state. The driver must submit subsequent medical re-certifications to maintain an active CDL for interstate commerce;
- The state will have to make sure the driver is medically qualified before issuing or renewing the CDL, and will have to add the driver's medical qualification status to the driver's driving record;
- As of January 30, 2014, employers will have to obtain each applicant's driving record to verify that he/she is medically qualified; and
- Because drivers' medical qualification status will be instantly accessible to enforcement officers, effective January 30, 2014, many drivers will no longer need to carry their medical cards with them in the truck or bus.

Between January 30, 2012, and January 30, 2014, all interstate drivers who hold a CDL and are required to hold a medical card must begin providing their medical cards to their state driver licensing agencies. States may determine how those cards are to be delivered (e.g., in person, mail, fax, email), whether copies will be allowed, and whether a fee will be charged for medical card processing.

The rule will affect neither the frequency with which medical cards must be obtained nor the frequency with which CDLs must be renewed.

Beginning January 30, 2014, for interstate CDL drivers, motor carriers will no longer be required to keep a copy of each driver's medical card in the qualification file. However, to verify a driver's medical qualification status, employers will instead have to obtain a copy of the driver's motor vehicle record (MVR) before allowing the driver to drive a CMV in interstate commerce. Under prior rules, motor carriers had 30 days from hire to obtain the MVR on new drivers.

Medical examiners and state licensing agencies will be required to keep a copy of each driver's medical card for three years. Employers will also have to continue maintaining medical cards for any drivers not subject to the rule, including non-CDL drivers.

The final rule only applies to interstate CDL holders and their motor carrier employers, but states are expected to adopt similar rules in order to continue receiving federal highway funds.

Four categories

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The rule distinguishes between four types of drivers, and each CDL driver will be expected to notify his or her state licensing agency — by January 30, 2014 — of the type of driver he or she is or expects to be, as follows:

- **Non-excepted interstate** — operates in interstate commerce, is qualified under [Part 391](#), and is required to obtain a medical card.
- **Excepted interstate** — operates in interstate commerce but is exempt from having to obtain a medical card under [Part 391](#).
- **Non-excepted intrastate** — operates only in intrastate commerce and is subject to state qualification rules.
- **Excepted intrastate** — operates in intrastate commerce but is exempt from state qualification rules.

All “non-excepted interstate” drivers will have to provide the state with a current medical card and all future cards.

If a driver’s medical card or medical variance expires, the licensing state must remove the driver’s interstate CMV driving privileges within 60 days. The states will not be required to notify drivers of their medical card expiration dates.