

## ***SCHOOL BUS DRIVER ENDORSEMENT***

### **Are there new requirements for obtaining a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) as a School Bus Driver?**

Yes. New requirements entail specific knowledge and skills tests for all school bus drivers who are required to hold a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). There are also changes to the CDL requirements for all commercial motor vehicle drivers (CMV). The changes to the CDL allows the disqualification of CMV drivers who have been convicted of certain traffic violations, or of committing drug and alcohol-related offenses, while operating a passenger vehicle

### **What are the new requirements specifically for bus drivers?**

The new law is called a school bus driver endorsement. The following three requirements must be met to qualify for a school bus driver endorsement:

- (1) Qualify for (a state-established) passenger vehicle endorsement. Pass the knowledge and skills test for obtaining a passenger vehicle endorsement.
- (2) Knowledge Test. (The driver) Must have knowledge covering at least the following three topics:
  - (a) Loading and unloading children including the safe operation of stop signal devices, external mirror systems, flashing lights and other warning and passenger safety devices required for school buses by state or federal law or regulations.
  - (b) Emergency exits and procedures for safely evacuating passengers in an emergency.
  - (c) State and federal laws and regulations for safely traversing highway rail grade crossings.
- (3) Skills Test. (The driver) Must take a driving skills test in a school bus of the same vehicle group as the school bus applicant will drive.

### **If I already hold a CDL with a passenger vehicle endorsement, will I have to take a knowledge test for the school bus driver endorsement?**

If your licensing process, or your preservice/inservice training did not include a knowledge test that meets the requirements listed above, then the driver currently holding a CDL will have to take a test.

If the existing state law meets the requirements for the knowledge test, then the driver currently holding a CDL will not have to take another test.

### **What about the skills test? Will I also have to take that?**

At the discretion of the state, the skills test may be waived for an applicant who: (1) currently holds a CDL; (2) has been employed as a driver of the type of vehicle he/she seeks to drive; (3) has a good driving record; and (4) meets the conditions of having no serious traffic offenses in the past two years. This waiver will not be available after September 30, 2006.

### **What exactly does it mean to have a good driving record and no serious traffic offenses in the past two years?**

The law includes the following criteria:

- I) Has not had his/her driver's license or CDL suspended, revoked or canceled or been disqualified from operating a CMV.

- II) Has not been convicted of any of the disqualifying offenses outlined in the law (see chart on back page) while operating a CMV or of any offense in a non-CMV that would be disqualifying under the law if committed in a CMV.

### **I drive different types of buses from one day to another. Will I have to have a separate school bus driver endorsement for each of these vehicles?**

The law requires a skills test in a school bus of the same vehicle group as the applicant will drive. There are three vehicle groups: Combination vehicle (A); Heavy Straight Vehicle (B)—large buses over 26,000 lbs. fall into this category; Small Vehicle (C)—16 or more passengers, GVW under 26,000 lbs.

### **What if my state already meets all of the requirements in its current CDL process?**

Some states already meet or exceed the standards of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Those states standards may remain and continue to be in effect. If a state does not meet the minimum standards set by the FMCSA, the state will have to revise its standards.

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## ***COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE REVISIONS***

### **What are the new requirements for all CMV drivers? Can I lose my CDL if I commit a traffic offense when driving my regular vehicle?**

Yes. The FMCSA has set guidelines for disqualification of a CDL if a serious traffic violation has occurred, leading the state to revoke your regular state driver's license when driving a non-CMV. States are required to notify the CDL Information System of the revocation of a driver's license.

### **What will happen when I renew my CDL?**

The state will look to see if the driver's non-CDL license has been suspended, revoked or canceled for cause in a 3-year period ending on the date of application. The state also will request a complete driving record from all states where the applicant has previously been licensed for any vehicle within the last 10 years. However, the state is only required to do this comprehensive 10-year check, if the driver is renewing a CDL for the first time after September 30, 2002.

### **What are the disqualifying offenses for CDL holders under the new regulations?**

The revised disqualifying regulations created by the FMCSA are (1) Driving a CMV while CDL is revoked, suspended or canceled, or while the driver is disqualified based upon the driver's operation of a CMV; and (2) causing fatality through the negligent or criminal operation of a CMV. There are also emergency situations when a driver poses an imminent hazard that can result in disqualification.

### **What additional offenses constitute a serious traffic violation when operating a CMV?**

The list of violations is at the end of this section.

**Are there any disqualifications for driving offenses committed while driving a non-CMV?**

Yes, if the CDL holder commits certain offenses while operating a non-CMV, the violations may prohibit the holder of the CDL from operating a CMV. These offenses include driving under the influence, leaving the scene of an accident, refusing to take an alcohol test, etc. The specific disqualification periods vary from 60 days to lifetime (for second conviction of major offenses or any instance of using the vehicle in the commission of a felony involving a controlled substance). The complete list is below. (The rule previously issued by DOT would have suspended a CDL holder's CMV driving privileges after convictions of certain non-CMV driving offenses, regardless of any action taken by the state to revoke the person's drivers license. The new rule requires that in order for CDL holder to have his/her CMV driving privileges suspended or disqualified as a result of certain convictions committed while operating a non-CMV (e.g. car), the state that issued the drivers license must find that the offenses warrant revocation, cancellation, or suspension of the person's license.)

**When will this new law become effective?**

The law will come into effect on September 30, 2002. States have three years to fully comply with the new requirements before they face penalties.

**DISQUALIFYING OFFENSES**

The length of time a driver is disqualified as a CDL holder varies for the offenses listed below. Please refer to the law for details.

<b>Major Offenses</b>
▪ Driving under the influence of alcohol.
▪ Driving under the influence of a controlled substance.
▪ Having an alcohol concentration of 0.04 or greater while operating a CMV.
▪ Refusing to take an alcohol test.
▪ Leaving the scene of an accident.
▪ Using the vehicle to commit a felony.
▪ Driving a CMV with a revoked, suspended or canceled license.
▪ Causing a fatality through the negligent operation of a CMV.
▪ Using the vehicle in the commission of a felony involving manufacturing, distributing or dispensing a controlled substance.
<b>Serious Traffic Violations</b>
▪ Speeding excessively involving any speed of 15 mph or more above posted speed limit.
▪ Driving recklessly as defined by state or local law.
▪ Making improper or erratic traffic lane changes.
▪ Follow the vehicle ahead too closely.
▪ Violating state or local law arising in connection with a fatal accident.
▪ Driving a CMV without a CDL.
▪ Driving a CMV without a CDL in possession.
▪ Driving a CDL without the proper endorsements for the vehicle being operated.
<b>Railroad-highway grade crossing offenses</b>
▪ Failure to slow down and check that tracks are clear of an approaching train.
▪ Failure to stop if the tracks are not clear.
▪ Failure to stop before driving onto the crossing, if at a crossing that requires a stop.
▪ Failure to have sufficient space to drive completely through the crossing without stopping.
▪ Failure to obey a traffic control device or the directions of an enforcement official at the crossing.
▪ Failure to negotiate a crossing because of insufficient undercarriage clearance.



**COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE  
REVISIONS  
AND  
SCHOOL BUS DRIVER  
ENDORSEMENT**

**WHAT EVERY SCHOOL BUS  
DRIVER NEEDS TO KNOW!**

Prepared by the Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel Division of the American Federation of Teachers.

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