



Is Your Doc Down With The DOT?

Currently, any medical provider with a State license to perform physical examinations can conduct DOT physicals, regardless of their level of expertise or industry knowledge about federal guidelines. While the majority of practitioners make a point to uphold federal standards, many do not follow or simply do not know the federal regulations in regard to driver fitness. This problem led the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to issue a final rule requiring all medical examiners who perform DOT physicals to be certified and listed on a national registry by May 21, 2014, in order to continue conducting these exams.

The FMCSA's online resources provide a wealth of information about this new National Registry program, including the official full-length text of the final rule, available here:

http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/National_Registry_Rule.pdf

Additionally, three elements of the FMCSA's "Frequently Asked Questions" may be of interest to employers with commercial drivers on their payroll:

1. General Overview of New Federal Register for Medical Examiners

What is the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners?

The National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (National Registry) is a Federal program that establishes requirements for healthcare professionals that perform physical qualification examinations for truck and bus drivers. To become a certified medical examiner (ME) and be listed on the National Registry, healthcare professionals must complete training and testing on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) physical qualifications standards and guidelines. The National Registry web site is accessible to carriers, drivers, enforcement officials, and the general public.

All healthcare professionals whose scope of practice authorizes them to perform physical examinations, as defined by the state in which they practice, and who intend to perform physical examinations and issue medical certificates for commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers to meet the requirements of Section 391.41 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) must be certified and listed on FMCSA's National Registry.

Who is impacted by this program?

The program impacts medical examiners who need to obtain certification in order to continue issuing medical certificates for truck and bus drivers, CMV drivers who need to obtain medical certificates from examiners on the National Registry, motor carriers who must ensure their interstate drivers have been medically certified by an examiner on the registry, and training and testing organizations that will deliver these aspects of the program.

Are there any National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommendations related to the establishment of the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners?

The National Registry final rule addresses four NTSB recommendations on a comprehensive medical oversight program for interstate drivers that include the following elements:

- Individuals performing medical examinations for drivers are qualified to do so and are educated about occupational issues for drivers (H-01-017);
- A tracking mechanism is established that ensures that every prior application by an individual for medical certification is recorded and reviewed. (H-01-018); 2
- Medical certification regulations are updated periodically to permit trained examiners to clearly determine whether drivers with common medical conditions should be issued a medical certificate. (H-01-019); and
- Individuals performing examinations have specific guidance and a readily identifiable source of information for questions on such examinations (H-01-020).

FMCSA staff will meet with NTSB staff to provide a briefing on the rule. The Agency will provide any additional technical assistance necessary for the NTSB to determine whether the recommendations have been satisfied through the rulemaking.

2. Employers of Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

What impact does the National Registry have on CMV drivers and motor carriers?

As of May 21, 2014, interstate CMV drivers are required to obtain physical examinations and a medical examiner's certificate from a certified ME listed on the [National Registry website](#).

How is the driver medical certificate issued by a ME on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners different from the current driver medical certificate?

The new driver medical certificate will contain the same medical information as the current driver medical certificate, but will now include the ME's National Registry number.

Additionally, this rule assures that all healthcare professionals who perform medical exams for interstate truck and bus drivers are trained, tested and certified on the specific physical qualifications standards that affect a driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle.

3. Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

How will an employer or enforcement personnel verify that a ME is on the National Registry?

They may visit the National Registry web site at <http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov> and search the registry for the ME who provided the driver's medical certificate. They can search by ME name or National Registry number.

How will a driver/carrier find a ME?

ME candidates who pass the exam will be listed in an [online registry](#) located on the National Registry web site. As of May 21, 2014, all interstate CMV drivers seeking a medical examination/certificate must use a ME listed on the National Registry.

To find a certified ME, visit the National Registry web site at <http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov> and conduct a basic or advanced search.

If I lose my medical card, can I get a replacement copy from the National Registry?

No. The National Registry is not intended to serve as a medical certificate database for drivers or carriers. To get a copy of your signed medical certificate you must contact the ME that issued it.

What happens to a ME who inappropriately or fraudulently certifies a driver?

Errors, omissions, or other indications of improper certification by a ME of a driver in either the completed Medical Examination Reports or the medical certificates, may result in FMCSA initiating action to remove the ME from the National Registry. The final rule provides due process for addressing the removal of MEs from the National Registry.

Enactment of the final rule in 2014 seems like a long way off, but it will be here soon. Take steps today to ensure your current medical provider intends to pursue certification on the National Registry. If they don't, find one who does.

Sources:

<http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/>

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