Federal Vision Exemption Program

Check FMCSA website (http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/mehandbook/me3_fed_exemption.aspx) for any updates to this document. Current as of Feb. 1, 2014

The FMCSA Vision Exemption Program is for **monocular vision**. The vision exemption is issued for a maximum of 2 years and is renewable.

The driver must be otherwise qualified under 49 CFR 391.41(b)(1-13) or hold another valid medical exemption to legally operate a commercial motor vehicle in interstate commerce. Provisions of the vision exemption include an annual medical examination and an eye examination by an ophthalmologist or an optometrist.

At the annual recertification examination, the driver should present the current vision exemption and a copy of the specialist eye examination report. Certify the qualified driver for 1 year and issue a medical examiner's certificate with the "accompanied by" exemption checkbox marked and write "vision" to identify the type of Federal exemption.

The motor carrier is responsible for ensuring that the driver has the required documentation before driving a commercial vehicle. The driver is responsible for carrying both the vision exemption and the medical examiner's certificate while driving and keeping both current.

Qualified by Operation of 49 CFR 391.64: "Grandfathered"

Prior to the implementation of the Federal Vision Exemption Program, FMCSA conducted an initial vision study program that ran from 1992 to 1996. At the conclusion of that study, 2,656 drivers received a one-time letter confirming participation in the study and granting a continued exemption from the monocular vision requirement, as long as the driver is otherwise medically fit for duty and can meet the vision qualification requirements with the one eye. The driver who was grandfathered must have an annual medical examination and an eye examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. There are very few remaining drivers from that program.
At the annual medical examination, the driver should present to the medical examiner the letter identifying the driver as a participant in the vision study program and a copy of the specialist eye examination report. Certify the qualified driver for 1 year and issue a medical examiner's certificate with the "Qualified by operation of 49 CFR 391.64" checkbox marked.

For further information on this Federal Exemption, contact medicalexemptions@dot.gov or call 703-448-3094.

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**Federal Diabetes Exemption Program**

Check FMCSA Diabetes Exemption Website (http://nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov/mehandbook/diabetes_exempt_ep.aspx) for any updates to this document. *Current as of Feb. 1, 2014*

Prior to the implementation of the Federal Diabetes Exemption Program, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) conducted a waiver study program concerning commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operation by drivers with insulin-controlled diabetes. A small number of the drivers who participated in the study and were participants in good standing on March 31, 1996, were provided a letter from FMCSA that grandfathered them an exemption from standard 49 CFR 391.41(b)(3), by operation of 49 CFR 391.64(a), as long as they were in compliance with the requirements. These drivers are governed by 49 CFR 391.64(a) and must provide the letter from FMCSA as proof of their grandfathered status before you issue a Medical Examiner's Certificate to the driver.

On September 3, 2003, FMCSA published a Notice of Final Disposition announcing the decision to issue exemptions to the diabetes mellitus prohibition under 49 CFR 391.41(b)(3). This program allows some drivers who meet all medical standards and guidelines, other than the use of insulin, to be medically certified and operate a CMV if the driver also meets the parameters for issuance of a Federal diabetes exemption.

The 2003 Notice explained that in considering exemptions, FMCSA must ensure that the issuance of diabetes exemptions will not be contrary to the public interest, and that the exemption achieves an acceptable level of safety.

**Medical Examiner (ME) Responsibilities**

As a medical examiner, you are responsible for determining if the driver is otherwise medically fit for duty and issuing a Medical Examiner's Certificate that indicates the driver is certified ONLY IF the driver has a diabetes exemption.

The Federal Diabetes Exemption Program is responsible for determining if the driver meets program requirements and for issuing the diabetes exemption.

The motor carrier is responsible for ensuring that the driver has a current medical examiner's certificate and diabetes exemption before allowing the driver to operate a commercial vehicle.

The driver is responsible for carrying both the Medical Examiner's Certificate and the diabetes exemption while driving and keeping both certificates current. The Federal diabetes exemption must be renewed every 2 years. The driver must also comply with program requirements that include:

- **Annual:**
  - CMV driver medical qualification examination.
  - Endocrinologist evaluation.
  - Ophthalmologist/optometrist evaluation.
  - Diabetes mellitus education.
- Monitoring blood glucose.
NOTE: Although you, as a medical examiner, are not involved in the Diabetes Exemption Program monitoring, it is helpful for you to understand the requirements. The driver must provide a quarterly evaluation checklist from his/her endocrinologist throughout the 2-year period or risk losing the exemption.

For more information, review the Diabetes Exemption Application (PDF). Please direct questions concerning Driver Exemption Programs to medicalexemptions@dot.gov or call 703-448-3094.