



FMCSA's Entry-Level Driver Training Proposed Rule
Frequently Asked Questions
December 2016

Introduction: On December 7, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration released their anticipated Entry-level Driver Training final rule. Under the final rule, anyone seeking a CDL must complete an approved Entry-Level Driver Training course before they are allowed to take the CDL skills test.

Who must complete Entry-level Driver Training? Anyone seeking a CDL for the first time must complete an approved Entry Level Driver Training Course before they take their CDL skills test. Those exempted from the CDL skills test (e.g. veterans with a skills test waiver), will not be required to complete ELDT.

What is included in an ELDT Course? FMCSA has outlined specific curriculum for approved ELDT courses. All courses are comprised of two primary components: theory instruction, and behind the wheel (BTW) training.

Theory Instruction: The theory portion of an approved ELDT course can be taught either online or in a classroom. The primary components of the theory portion are: Basic Operations; Safe Operating Procedures; Advanced Operating Procedures; Vehicle Systems; and Non-Vehicle Activities.

Behind the Wheel Training: This portion of an approved ELDT course is where the driver begins to learn and hone the skills necessary for the safe operation of a commercial motor vehicle. BTW training is subdivided into range instruction and road instruction.

Range instruction is conducted on a closed "driving range" or on streets, roads or lots that are "free from obstruction and provide adequate sight lines." It focuses on development of basic skills and maneuvers like backing, parking, coupling and uncoupling, and pre-, post-, and en route-inspections.

Road instruction occurs in regular traffic and is focused on safe driving behavior, interaction with traffic and accident avoidance.

How will students be evaluated? Like any preparatory course, students will be periodically tested during the theory portion to ensure they understand the federal regulations and have the knowledge necessary to pass the CDL knowledge test. At the end of the theory portion, students would receive a written knowledge assessment which would provide a litmus test of their competence in this area of instruction. Drivers must pass the exam with an 80% proficiency score.

For BTW training assessment, the final rule requires that trainees demonstrate proficiency through repetitive successful completion of all required BTW skill elements.

How long will a training course take? The proposed rule does not outline a specific number of hours necessary for a student to spend in classroom or BTW instruction but requires demonstrated proficiency in all training elements. This allows trainers the flexibility to adapt their training to the specific needs of individual students.

Are there special trainings elements for those seeking specific vehicle endorsements? Yes, those seeking a passenger, school bus, or hazardous materials endorsement would be required to have additional training as part of the ELDT proposed rule.

What if my state currently requires more stringent ELDT? The final rule does not preempt state rules on ELDT. Instead, it establishes a minimum standard that providers must adhere to. Drivers receiving training in a state with more stringent rules must meet those state requirements.

Who is allowed to provide ELDT? Anyone who complies with the training provider requirements proposed in this rule can become a registered trainer. Training providers, in-house or school trainers, would be required to self-certify their programs to FMCSA and, upon request, provide documentation that their curricula comply with the requirements. The trainers must also consent to audits by FMCSA. While the proposal allowed small training providers (e.g. those who train less than three drivers annually) to meet slightly less stringent certification requirements, the final rule establishes a minimum requirements all training providers must meet.

How would I know that a training provider is certified? The final rule calls for the creation of a National Training Provider Registry, which will work similar to the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners. FMCSA will be establishing a website that trainees and potential employers can query to verify their preferred provider is certified.

How will the DMV know a driver has successfully completed ELDT? Once a driver successfully completes the required training a completion certificate will also be electronically transmitted to FMCSA no later than midnight the day after course completion. FMCSA will then update the driver's record to note completion. If a driver has not passed ELDT, the State Licensing Agency will not allow him or her to take the CDL skills test.

Will these new rules improve safety? In final rule, FMCSA acknowledges a lack of data directly linking training to improvements in safety outcomes. However, experts agree that the prevalence of active driver training programs indicate stronger ELDT requirements would improve driver safety.

When does this rule take effect? The new compliance date for the new rules is February 7, 2020. Drivers who have obtained their commercial learner's permit before this date, will have one year to obtain the CDL, otherwise they will be required to complete ELDT.

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