

Do Any of Your Drivers have Sleep Apnea?

The awareness of sleep apnea has increased in our society over the last two years. A commercial driver with sleep apnea significantly increases a motor carrier's chance of having an accident. Managers of drivers need to be aware of this disease and communicate with their examining medical physicians the importance of detecting sleep apnea during a medical examination. You also need to provide education to your drivers so they are aware of the symptoms of sleep apnea.

Symptoms

- Frequent silences during sleep due to breaks in breathing (apnea)
- Choking or gasping during sleep to get air into the lungs
- Loud snoring
- Sudden awakenings to restart breathing or waking up in a sweat
- Daytime sleepiness and feeling unrefreshed by a night's sleep, including falling asleep at inappropriate times

Primary causes and risk factors of obstructive sleep apnea

- Being overweight or obese (although 50% of people with sleep apnea are not obese)
- Large tonsils or adenoids
- Other distinctive physical attributes (deviated septum, shape of head and neck, receding chin, enlarged tongue)
- Nasal congestion or blockage (from cold, sinusitis, allergies, smoking, etc.)
- Throat muscles and tongue relax more than normal during sleep (possibly due to alcohol or sedatives or age)

What does the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration say regarding Sleep Apnea?

Individuals with suspected or untreated sleep apnea should be considered medically unqualified to operate a commercial vehicle until the diagnosis has been dispelled or the condition has been treated successfully. In addition, as a condition of continuing qualification, commercial drivers who are being treated for sleep apnea should agree to continue uninterrupted therapy as long as they continue to operate a CMV. Sleep apnea should not interfere with safe driving practices; therefore, it is recommended that drivers diagnosed with sleep apnea perform testing on an annual basis for certification. Any of the following tests can be performed for annual certification these include: Polysomnography, Multiple Sleep Latency, and Maintenance of Wakefulness test. Ultimately, it is the medical examiner that determines certification and at their discretion, they determine what follow up recommendations and/or testing should be made based on their assessment.

Can we expect any changes to the FMCSA regulations by the end of this year?

Usually, I address this issue later in the year; however, with the upcoming election it is important for you to understand where new and proposed regulations stand before a change in our administration.

Current new regulations that have been sent to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for final approval and stand the best chance of becoming regulations by the end of the year:

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| 1. Integrating the Medical Certification requirements with a CDL | Submitted to the OMB 8-21-08 |
| 2. Medical Examiner Standards and National Registry | Submitted to the OMB 8-21-08 |
| 3. New Entrant Safety Assurance Audit | Submitted to the OMB 9-25-08 |
| 4. Intermodal Chassis Registration Program | Submitted to the OMB 9-25-08 |

The following proposed regulations have not yet been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget and likely will not make final regulation in 2008.

- Driver Hours of Service
- Electronic On Board Recorders
- Entry level driver training requirements for CDL
- CDL Permit requirements