

Entry-Level Driver Training Requirements



Federal Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) regulations (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-380#subpart-F>) set the minimum requirements for training that entry-level drivers of commercial motor vehicles (CMV) must complete before being permitted to take certain commercial driver's license (CDL) skills or knowledge tests on or after February 7, 2022. This technical brief explains what rural and tribal transit agency staff and trainers need to know to comply with the regulations.

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What are the Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) regulations?

The Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) regulations, enacted in 2012 under Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), set the minimum federal requirements for training that all entry-level drivers of Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV), as defined in 380.605 except for exemptions explained below, must complete before being permitted to take certain commercial driver's license (CDL) skills or knowledge tests. It is a negotiated rule, meaning that stakeholders came together to write the rule. The ELDT requirements (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-380#subpart-F>) went into effect on February 7, 2022.

The ELDT regulations established minimum training standards for individuals applying for (<https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/registration/commercial-drivers-license/entry-level-driver-training-eldt>):

- Class A or Class B CDL for the first time
- Upgrade of an existing Class B CDL to a Class A CDL
- Hazardous materials (H), passenger (P), or school bus (S) endorsement for the first time

The regulations apply to CDL drivers of private and public transportation agencies, including transit agencies that receive Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, effective February 7, 2022. This is the first time that the content of CDL training will be federally regulated.

States may have training requirements that exceed the federal requirements. A state may schedule a CDL skills test before the driver has completed the training or require completion of training prior to scheduling a skills test. However, a State may not administer the skills test or knowledge test until the driver completes the applicable training for the CDL or endorsement.

Individuals who were issued a Commercial Learners Permit (CLP), or were issued a CDL prior to February 7, 2022, are NOT required to complete ELDT training.

Who is exempt from ELDT regulations?

The ELDT regulations do not apply to individuals excepted from the CDL requirements under 49 CFR Part 383:

- Drivers with a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) that was issued before February 7, 2022, and the driver obtained/obtains a CDL before the CLP expires
- Drivers issued a CDL or an S, P, or H endorsement before February 7, 2022
- Drivers that states have waived the CDL skills test for under 49 CFR 383 or drivers who meet one of the exceptions for taking a skills test in 49 CFR Part 383
- Drivers applying under Section 383.3(c), (d), or (h)
- Drivers applying for a restricted CDL under Section 383.3(e) through (g)
- Military personnel who meet all requirements and conditions of Section 383.77
- Drivers for whom States waive the CDL skills test under Section 383.77 or individuals seeking to remove a restriction in accordance with Section 383.135(b)(7).
- Drivers who drive in interstate commerce and who are subject to the jurisdiction of the Federal Transit Administration may be exempt (see <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-B/chapter-III/subchapter-B/part-380/subpart-E/section-380.501> and contact FMCSA if there are any questions about applicability)

If an individual successfully completes the training required for the Class A CDL, they are eligible to take the skills test for the Class B CDL, as well as the Class A CDL. If a driver has a Class C license and wants to obtain a Class B or Class A license, they need to go through the process of obtaining a Class B or Class A license for the first time. In this case, it would not be considered an upgrade from Class C to Class B or Class A.

Some organizations have formally applied for exemptions from the regulation, such as the Ohio Department of Education (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/11/18/2021-25118/entry-level-driver-training-application-for-exemption-ohio-department-of-education>). There have also been reconsiderations of denial of application for exemption from the regulation.

How can the ELDT requirements be completed?

Applicants must complete all applicable entry-level driver training from a training provider registered with FMCSA. FMCSA does not intend to provide written or electronic training materials for any of the curricula set forth in the regulations.

Training must be completed before taking a CDL skills test. If the driver is applying for a hazardous materials (H) endorsement, training must be completed before taking a knowledge test. A driver seeking the H endorsement must successfully complete entry-level driver training (theory only) prior to taking the state-administered knowledge test.

State Driver Licensing Agencies (SDLA) must verify that an entry-level driver has completed the required training before allowing the driver to proceed with testing. The point at which the SDLA must verify completion of entry-level driver training depends on the type of license or endorsement the applicant is seeking. If the SLDA cannot electronically verify that these requirements are met, the state is not permitted to administer the CDL skills or knowledge test to the driver.

A driver can obtain ELDT training in any state and it will be accepted in every state, as long as the training provider is in the FMCSA Training Provider Registry (TPR).

Training providers can include, but are not limited to, schools and educational institutions, rural electronic cooperatives, motor carriers, transit agencies, state or local governments, labor management programs, and individual trainers. Training providers should verify that they comply with all applicable state laws. Cities and towns can provide training for their own transit agencies once they register with the TPR. FMCSA may remove trainers from the TPR following audits if they believe that there is a need to do so. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) recommends that smaller transit agencies may want to form partnerships with workforce development programs, community colleges, technical training programs, or private companies that focus exclusively on entry-level CDL training. Training providers who do not want to make their services available to all drivers can choose not to include full contact information in the TRP and just be listed on the by name, city, and state. Drivers themselves are not able to submit any information to the TPR about their own training.

If a transit agency wants to provide their own ELDT-based training, they will need to apply to be added to the TPR, which has been created by the U.S. DOT Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. To qualify, the trainers must:

- Develop or purchase a curriculum that complies with 49 CFR Part 380
- Have an adequate classroom and range to conduct training
- Have vehicles of the correct types and classes
- Have instructors with the correct CDL licenses (the same or higher than the drivers they are teaching for certain types of training) and at least two years of driving experience
- Comply with any state/local requirements that might apply to training providers
- Complete the FMCSA TPR application
- Continue to meet the eligibility requirements to stay listed on the TPR

What training is required?

To fulfill ELDT requirements, drivers must complete:

Theory Training

- Lectures, demonstrations, computer-based training, online learning/eLearning, and/or bus simulator training
- No minimum number of hours
- Driver must score at least 80% on the assessment
- If the entire theory curriculum is presented via online training, online providers must ensure that the training content is delivered and/or prepared by theory instructors meeting the definition of “theory instructor” set forth in the ELDT regulations. If a training provider offers theory instruction only online, the state licensing requirements do not apply.
- Training topics for Class B drivers and Passenger (P) Endorsement include, but are not limited to:
 - Basic operation
 - Orientation
 - Control Systems/Dashboard
 - Pre/En-Route/Post-Trip Inspections

- Basic Control
- Shifting/Operating Transmissions
- Backing and Docking
- Safe operating procedures
 - Visual search
 - Communication
 - Distracted driving
 - Speed and space management
 - Night operations
 - Extreme driving
- Advanced operating procedures
 - Emergencies
 - Hazard perception
 - Skid control and recovery
 - Railroad-highway grade crossings
- Vehicle systems and reporting malfunctions
 - Identification and diagnosis of malfunctions
 - Roadside inspections
 - Maintenance
- Non-driving activities
 - Hours of Service
 - Handling and documenting cargo
 - Environmental compliance issues
 - Fatigue and wellness
 - Post-crash procedures
 - External communications
 - Whistleblowers and coercion
 - Trip planning
 - Drugs and alcohol
 - Medical requirements
 - Fueling
 - Idling
 - Baggage and cargo management
 - ADA compliance
 - Passenger management

Behind the Wheel (BTW) Training

- Actual (not simulator) operation of a commercial motor vehicle on a range (range means an area that is free of obstructions and has adequate sight lines where drivers can maneuver safely and freely from interference from other vehicles and hazards) or public road
- Basic vehicle control skills and mastery of basic maneuvers
- No minimum number of hours
- The training provider will determine the driver's proficiency for BTW training

There is no mandatory order that the Theory, BTW-range, and BTW-public road training must be administered. Drivers can start their theory training before they have their Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP). Drivers must complete both the theory and BTW portions of training within one year of each other. Training records must be retained for three years. BTW range and road training must be completed by the same training provider, but Theory and BTW training may be delivered by separate training providers. Instructors must document the total number of hours each driver spends to complete the BTW curriculum.

The regulations do not impose a penalty on the driver if the training provider fails to comply with the two-day reporting requirement. However, the driver may not take the applicable skills or knowledge test until the training provider has submitted the driver's certification information to the TPR, and the information is accessed by the licensing state.

To find a TPR registered trainer, in the section titled "Do you need to find a training provider?" on <https://tpr.fmcsa.dot.gov/>, there is a link to a spreadsheet: "Download the list of registered training providers". As of February 9, 2022, there were 2,629 in-person, 173 online, and 146 traveling training providers listed.

In addition to listing trainers, the TPR also records driver training and certifications. Information collected will include driver name, date of birth, CDL class and type, and additional demographic information.

Funding and technical assistance

Funding is available for State Driver's Licensing Agencies (SDLA) in each state and Washington, D.C. responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of all or part of the CDL. The Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) Grant provides financial assistance to states to achieve compliance with the requirements of 49 CFR Parts 383 and 384. The CDLPI grant program provides financial assistance for other entities capable of executing national projects that aid states in compliance efforts and that will improve the national CDL program. The current funding opportunity (<https://bit.ly/3fpaztw>) is open through February 28, 2022.

Technical assistance is available through FMCSA's interactive Training Provider Registration Tutorial, https://tpr.fmcsa.dot.gov/content/Resources/Training_Provider_Registration/story.html.

State Department of Transportations (DOT) and Rural Transit Assistance Programs (RTAP) are a source of training and technical assistance. For example, Florida DOT and Florida RTAP collaborated to create the Florida Small and Rural Transit Agency Bus Operator Training Program which contains Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for Small and Rural Transit Agencies. These guidelines were developed using the Minimum Fixed-Route Bus Operator Training Guidelines developed through Florida DOT and the Florida Transit Safety and Operations Network (FTSON). The small and rural training program guidelines outline the training hours for classroom, behind the wheel, and route training, with instructions on how to access the recommended training courses and how to use them to provide instruction. Their curriculum was developed based on federal regulations and their state administrative code, but also allows agency operations and training personnel to insert locally specific training into the content.

During Colorado DOT's (CDOT) monthly call for grantees, they hosted ECO Transit's training team to provide a brief training session. CASTA (The Colorado Association of Transit Agencies) is planning on following up with further training. The session included the nuts and bolts of using the FMCSA Training Provider Registry (such as identifying training administrators and how to register training locations), how ECO Transit is preparing for the ELDT requirement (aligning their training with the requirements in the ELDT regulation and preparing tests that cover the requirements for the theory and BTW training percentages), and sharing best practices (an ELDT documentation file with a copy of the CDL license for each instructor).

Minnesota DOT and RTAP convened an ELDT Working Group and created three helpful checklists for trainers:

- Class A: <https://www.mnrtap.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Class-A-Behind-the-Wheel-ELDT-Checklist-1.pdf>
- Class B: <https://www.mnrtap.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Class-B-Behind-the-Wheel-ELDT-Checklist-1.pdf>
- Passenger Endorsement: <https://www.mnrtap.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Passenger-Endorsement-Behind-the-Wheel-ELDT-Checklist-1.pdf>

Advice from ELDT Trainers

National RTAP reached out to several trainers prior to the February 7, 2022 implementation of the ELDT requirement. National RTAP does not endorse or recommend any specific trainers, but we list trainers in our Directory of Trainers at <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Training/Directory-of-Trainers>.

John Filippone, Principle of Filippone Consulting and former National RTAP Review Board member, worked with FMCSA on the original ELDT regulations. He is currently working with a transportation authority to help them comply with the new regulations. John advises trainers to examine their current curriculum and see what needs to be added. With the new regulations, drivers who obtain a B license can drive a transit bus as well as other vehicles, including trucks. Therefore, he is working with the transportation authority to develop a curriculum that includes training on trailer hookups, standard transmissions, securing loads, and other topics not necessarily related to transit. This type of cross-training could make drivers employable across many types of services. John advises trainers to look closely at Appendix B and C in the ELDT regulation to align their curriculum with training requirements, and to keep in mind that training requirements differ by state, bus weight, and number of passengers. For example, because Group C vehicles transport 16 or more passengers (including the driver) and weigh less than 26,001 pounds, FMCSA does not believe it is necessary to prescribe BTW training for Group C vehicles comparable to the other classes of CDL (<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2016-28012/p-298>).

Mike McDonal, Director, Regulatory Compliance and Industry Relations, Saucon Technologies, and Chairman, Bus Maintenance and Repair Council, American Bus Association (ABA), provided a training session to the Midwest Motorcoach Association in December 2021. He worked with FMCSA to develop the presentation. Mike says that transit agencies need to be aware that there is

no minimum time requirement for either classroom (theory) or BTW training, and that every part of the curriculum is self-certified by the training agency (FMCSA does not develop the curriculum). Also, agencies should note that the range instructors do not need to have a current CDL, and FMCSA may send personnel to training sites to perform audits, so keeping accurate documentation records is critical. He advises trainers to complete their curriculum as early as possible, keeping in mind that the ELDT requirements are likely to evolve and become more defined as the system is put into practice. While it is easy to think of something new as a barrier, it can also be looked at as a revenue opportunity for potential trainers.

Mark Szyperski, President/CEO On Your Mark Transportation, LLC, has been training drivers directly and his company will travel to train on-site throughout the United States. On Your Mark Transportation has been providing ELDT for decades to transit systems, private motorcoach carriers, school buses, etc., and has not had to update their curriculum for the new regulations, since they provide more than what is required, including training on Customer Service, Driver Health and Wellness, Organizational Policies, and Basic Marketing, including use of Social Media. When they visit a client site, they work with the client and the area to find a suitable range, such as a school, church, or store parking lot, for the range component of the training. Training sessions can be customized and can take place over a single day or the course of a few weeks.

Kaleo Collier, Transit Safety Specialist, County of Kauaʻi Transportation Agency, has communicated with the agency's local licensing authority, has registered with the FMCSA TPR, and is planning on aligning the agency's training with the requirements. They plan to use many National RTAP training modules, such as START: Safety Training in Rural Transit, Dispatching and Scheduling Training, 2 The Point Training, etc.

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Further Information

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