



## **Code W: Commercial Drivers Unable to Drive Outside Canada Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What changes are being implemented?**

Effective March 3, 2014, as part of the Canada/U.S. Medical Reciprocity Agreement, Alberta will adopt a “W” identifier code, which will be displayed on the driver’s licence and driving record of those individuals not medically eligible to operate a commercial motor vehicle outside of Canada.

### **Who will the changes affect?**

Alberta commercial drivers operating a motor vehicle in classes 1, 2, 3, or 4 with one or more of the following conditions:

- Insulin-dependent diabetes;
- Established medical history or clinical diagnosis of epilepsy and/or seizures;
- Unable to meet minimum hearing requirements to transport dangerous goods; and
- Monocular vision.

### **When do the changes go into effect?**

The Code W was implemented on March 3, 2014.

### **Why are these changes being made?**

Code W was introduced in Alberta as a result of discussions between Canada and the United States to achieve reciprocity between the two nations on medical fitness for operators of commercial motor vehicles.

### **How were commercial drivers notified of this change?**

Commercial drivers affected by the Code W have been sent correspondence indicating that their drivers’ licence and driving record now display a Code W.

### **Where does the Code W show on the licence?**

The Code W appears on the face of the driver’s licence.

### **How many Alberta drivers are expected to have a Code W added to their licences?**

Approximately 2,400 Alberta drivers display a Code W on their licences and records.

### **Why are Alberta drivers with a Code W drive able to drive without restriction in Canada but not allowed to drive into the United States?**

Canada uses the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) Medical Standards for Drivers as a guideline in establishing basic minimum medical and visual qualifications for safe driving. However, the United States medical standards, the Federal Motor Carrier

2 Safety Regulations, prohibit drivers with the following conditions from operating commercial vehicles in the U.S.:

- Insulin-dependent diabetes;

- Established medical history or clinical diagnosis of epilepsy and/or seizures;
- Unable to meet minimum hearing requirements to transport dangerous goods; and
- Monocular vision.

Here is a link to the CCMTA Medical standards used in Canada for your convenience.

### **Do other provinces use the Code W?**

The Code W restriction is used by all Canadian provinces and territories.

### **What will happen if a commercial driver with a Code W tries to cross the border into the United States?**

Anyone with the Code W travelling into the United States who is operating a commercial vehicle will not be allowed to enter the United States. However, those with Code W travelling into the United States for personal reasons in a non-commercial vehicle will still be granted access.

### **Will commercial drivers from the United States with the same medical conditions also display a Code W on their licences keeping them from driving commercially in Canada?**

The United States is implementing a Code V identifying commercial drivers with medical conditions who do not comply with the Canadian Standards.

### **What if a Code W is added in error? How can this be fixed?**

If a driver believes a Code W has been placed on their drivers' licence in error, they should contact:

Alberta Transportation, Driver Fitness and Monitoring at 780-427-8230. This number can be reached toll free in Alberta by first calling 310-0000. Office hours are 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

### **What are the rules for notifying Alberta Transportation about commercial drivers with medical conditions?**

Section 16 of the *Operator Licensing and Vehicle Control Regulation* requires Albertans to disclose any disease or disability that may interfere with the safe operation of a motor vehicle when they apply for an operator's licence.

### **Does Alberta Transportation pay for the medical reports it requires?**

Medical examinations and the completion of forms required to obtain or renew a driver's licence are not covered under the **Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP)** for Albertans younger than 74.5 years of age, though such services are covered for those 74.5 years of age and over. For those not covered, physicians may bill the patient directly for the exam and form completion

### **When is a medical report required?**

Medicals are required at age 75, age 80, and every two years thereafter for holders of class 3, 5, 6 and 7 licences. Medical reports are required for holders of class 1, 2 and 4 commercial licences every five years until age 45, every two years until age 65, and annually thereafter.