

What You Need to Know About New Entry- Level Driver Training Rules for Truckers

Updated February 2020





After extremely lengthy consideration by the federal government, entry-level driver training (ELDT) for truck drivers, as well as other commercial motor vehicle operations, is set to go into effect in February 2022. Its long history goes back more than a decade before the creation of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) in 2000.

Beginning February 7, 2022, all entry-level operators of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in both interstate and intrastate commerce who are applying for a commercial driver's license (CDL) must first satisfactorily complete minimum training requirements before taking their state-administered CDL examination.

This includes those seeking: a Class A or Class B CDL; an upgrade to their CDL (such as a Class B CDL holder seeking a Class A CDL), or a hazardous materials (H), passenger (P), or school bus (S) endorsement for their license. Also included are those taking a CDL or P and S endorsement skills test or the H endorsement knowledge examination.

A Timeline of Developing Federal Entry-Level Driving Training Regulations.

1985

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA, which at that time had jurisdiction over commercial motor vehicle and driver safety) issued a voluntary "Model Curriculum for Training Tractor-Trailer Drivers."

1986

The Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program was established, with knowledge and driving skills tests, but with no training requirement. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), however, recommended a formal training requirement.

1991

The Motor Carrier Act of 1991 required the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to begin a rulemaking to require training by all entry-level CMV drivers.

The one exception is that in March 2019 FMCSA eliminated duplicative theory coursework for those upgrading from Class B to a Class A CDL. [See this PrePass blog for more details.](#)

The new regulations do not add or remove any exceptions from the required CDL skills test. Military drivers, farmers, and firefighters who are generally excepted from the CDL requirements in 49 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations), part 383, are also excepted from this rule.

What's In And What's Not In The New ELDT Rules

The minimum training requirements consist of 31 mandatory theory (knowledge) topics in five general areas and behind-the-wheel (BTW) sessions on an off-road driving range and on the road. The BTW training component must be in a representative

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vehicle for the CDL Class or endorsement sought. The hazardous materials (H) endorsement training does not include a BTW component. Truck driving simulators may be used for theory courses but not as a substitute for BTW sessions.

1993 & 1996

FHWA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM), followed by a study "Assessing the Adequacy of CMV Driver Training." The so-called "Adequacy Report" found that neither the trucking industry, the bus industry nor the school bus sector were "effectively providing adequate training," but could not establish a relationship between level of training and frequency of accidents.

2003

With no ELDT rule yet on the books, the public interest group Public Citizen sued FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, now a separate agency), causing FMCSA to publish a Final Rule in 2004, with training limited to four topics not otherwise covered in the CDL exam: driver qualifications, driver wellness, hours of service, and whistleblower protection. In a 2005 decision, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit agreed with Public Citizen that the FMCSA rule was inadequate and told FMCSA to try again.

The training must be given by a “training provider” registered with FMCSA’s newly-established Training Provider Registry (TPR). Training providers can be either “for-hire” (commercial) or “not-for-hire,” such as government or non-profit entities, including training schools, educational institutions, state/local governments, labor programs, motor carriers, owner-operators and individuals.

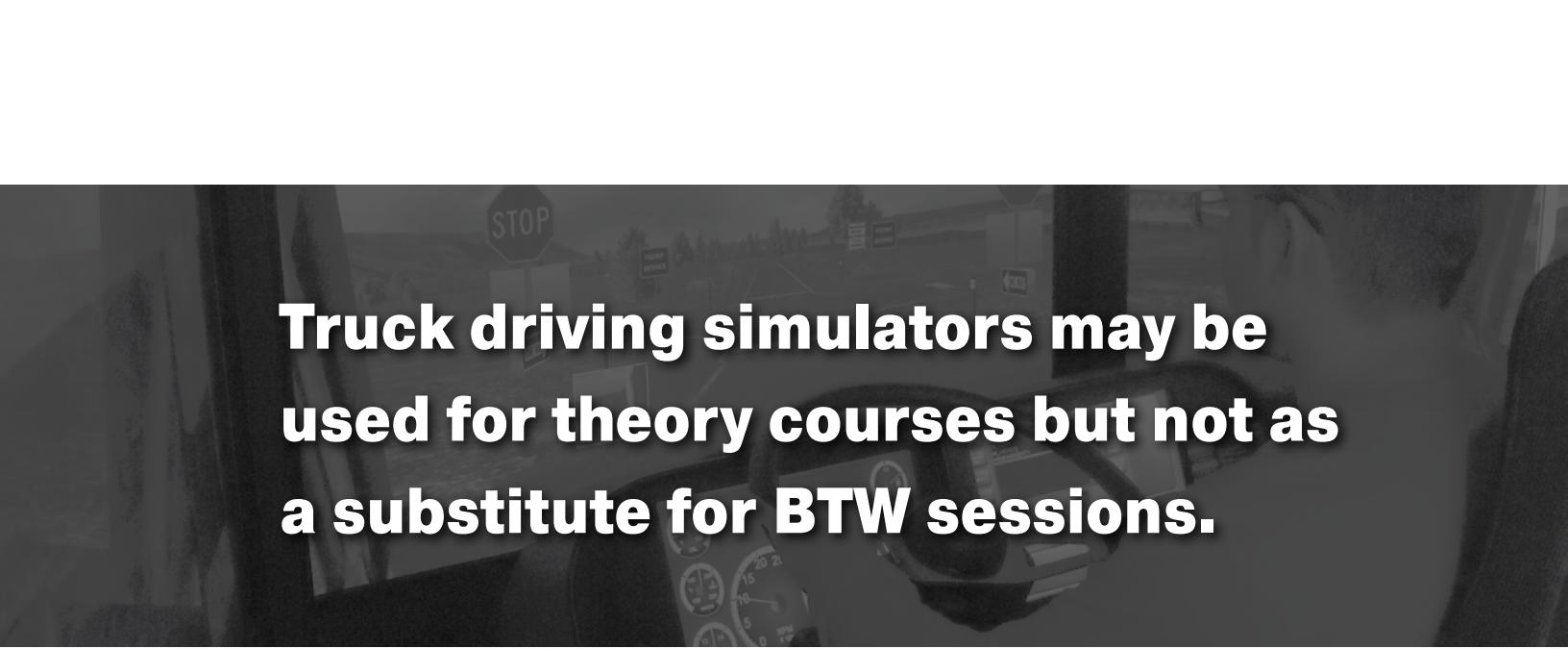
Third-party accreditation of a training provider is not required. Instead, each must self-certify that it meets the FMCSA curriculum requirements and that the instructors it uses are qualified under FMCSA and any state instructor criteria. Instructors themselves need not register with the TPR. FMCSA may audit training providers, but because of self-certification, FMCSA does not endorse any registered training provider and recommends students do their due diligence before enrollment.



2007

FMCSA released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) proposing ELDT applying to all new interstate CDL holders and including minimum training hours, a mandatory curriculum and training conducted by accredited schools, among other requirements. A flood of comments to the NPRM generally supported ELDT as a concept but pointed out that FMCSA had no data linking formal training to safety and so could not justify the rule’s costs. Plus, the accreditation organizations specified to approve training schools were years behind in qualifying educational institutions and many people commenting on the proposal argued that the adequacy of training should be assessed by student performance and not by minimum hours.

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Compared to past attempts at establishing ELDT rules, this February 2022 version:

- Does not require any specific minimum number of BTW hours. Instead, the training instructor must certify that the student's performance of BTW maneuvers on the range and on the road is proficient. It is worth noting that FMCSA will be collecting data on the number of BTW training hours and may at some point return with a rulemaking proposal, should a direct correlation be found between training hours and the later CMV driving records of the students.
- For the theory portions, again, there are no federally-mandated minimum classroom hours, but a passing grade of 80% is required on a written or electronic test.
- This FMCSA ELDT rules do not supersede or preempt any existing state CDL training rules – so if a state already requires minimum classroom or BTW training hours, then

2012

Congress returned to the topic of ELDT in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century ("MAP-21") legislation, requiring a final rule within 12 months. This time FMCSA utilized negotiated rulemaking in 2015, by convening a panel of 26 involved groups to work out the details of an agreed ELDT rule. The ELDT Final Rule was issued on December 8, 2016, setting an compliance date three years in the future to allow states sufficient time to adopt and modify their information systems.

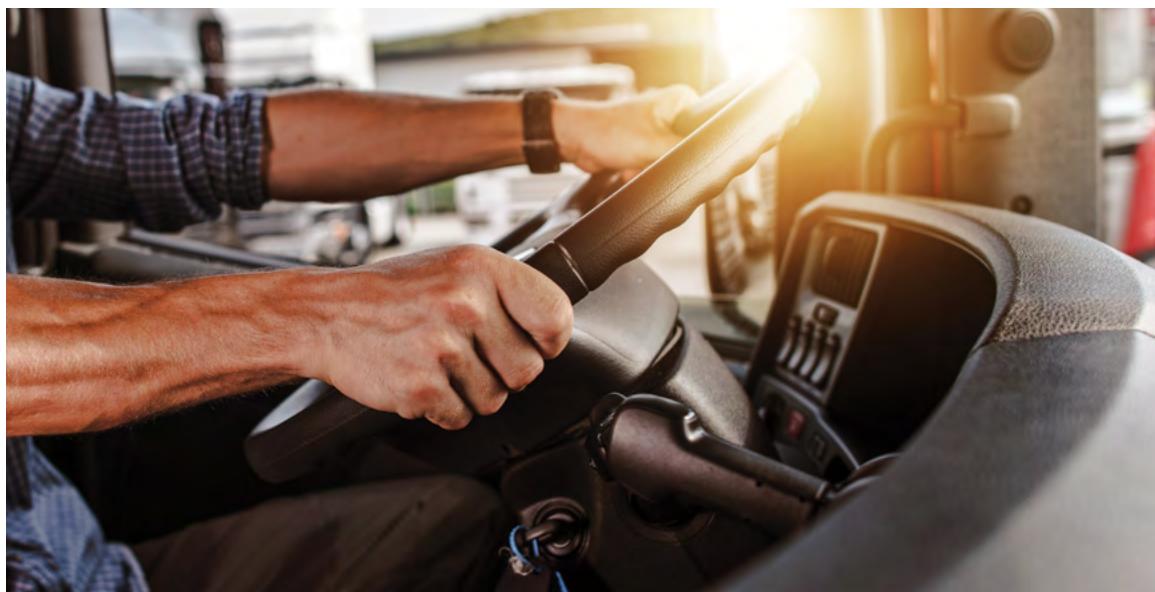
2022

ELDT set to take effect, with minimum training requirements for commercial motor vehicle operations, before they can take their state-administered CDL examination.

students domiciled in that state and taking training there must meet the state's requirements, as well as the federal requirements. The FMCSA rule does not prohibit students from seeking training outside of their state of domicile.

Once a student satisfactorily completes ELDT, the training provider transmits the information to FMCSA. The agency will then add new ELDT data elements to the Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS). Those data elements will include the training provider ID, the date ELDT was completed, and the type of ELDT the student received. States will then check CDLIS to confirm an applicant's eligibility before allowing the individual to take the relevant CDL or endorsement skills test or knowledge exam.

For more information, visit the [FMCSA's ELDT website](#).





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