



**NTSB 2017-2018
MOST
WANTED
LIST OF
TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY
IMPROVEMENTS**

Require Medical Fitness



HIGHWAY

MWL
MOST WANTED LIST



Some medical conditions, especially when left untreated, may endanger both the driver and the traveling public.

What is the issue?

In July 2000, in Jackson, Tennessee, a truck-tractor semitrailer, traveling at an estimated speed of 65 mph in a 55-mph work zone, collided with a Tennessee Highway Patrol vehicle that was part of a moving work zone, killing the patrolman inside. We found that the truck driver had been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea in 1997, one month after colliding with another police vehicle and seriously injuring two officers. The truck driver had a US Department of Transportation (DOT) medical examination in 1999, but hid his history of obstructive sleep apnea from his medical examiner.

Operating a commercial vehicle requires skill, constant vigilance, and physical stamina. Because the job can be challenging, it's important that drivers adopt a healthy lifestyle and inform their DOT medical examiner of health conditions that may affect their ability to drive safely. Some medical conditions, especially when left untreated, may endanger both the driver and the traveling public. At the same time, the health professionals certified to examine commercial drivers must have the proper background, training, and tools to ensure that all commercial drivers are screened effectively.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association (FMCSA) now requires training and certification for health care providers who perform medical examinations; however, there is no mechanism to ensure the recommended guidelines are followed. The FMCSA still allows health care providers without prescription authority (for example, chiropractors and physical therapists) to certify drivers. Additionally, the FMCSA needs to improve its ability to incorporate the latest medical and treatment information into guidelines for its certified medical examiners. For example, although we have found obstructive sleep apnea to be a factor in several of our crash investigations, the FMCSA still lacks a complete screening process for this condition.



Continued on next page



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What can be done?

The FMCSA needs to improve its ability to incorporate the latest medical and treatment information into guidelines for its certified medical examiners. For example, although we have found obstructive sleep apnea to be a factor in several of our crash investigations, the FMCSA still lacks a complete screening process for this condition.

We have recommended a comprehensive medical certification system for safety-critical transportation personnel that includes these features:

- the applicant's complete medical history, taken at prescribed intervals, that includes medications, conditions, and treatments as well as a physical examination;
- specific historical questions and physical examination procedures to identify applicants at high risk for sleep disorders;
- identification of specific conditions, treatments, and medications that initially disqualify applicants for duty, with certification contingent on further testing (specific to each condition);
- explicit and uniform processes and criteria for determining when the applicant has a treated, but otherwise disqualifying, condition;
- certificates that are good only for a limited time for applicants with conditions that are currently stable but known to be likely to deteriorate, to ensure appropriate retesting;
- medical examiners who:
 - are licensed or registered to perform examinations and prescribe medication in a given state;
 - are specifically trained and certified to perform medical certification exams; and
 - have ready access to information regarding disqualifying conditions that require further evaluation.
- a review system for medical examiners' work products with the information and capacity to identify and correct errors and substandard performance;
- the capacity to prevent applicants who have been deferred or denied certification from finding another provider who will certify them;
- a process for dealing with conditions that could impair safety and are diagnosed between certification exams; and
- guidance for medical providers that should be used when the provider believes a medical condition disqualifies an individual for duty.

The goal is simple: **ensure safety-critical professionals are medically fit for duty before they operate a vehicle.** ■

The NTSB Most Wanted List highlights safety issues identified from the NTSB's accident investigations to increase awareness about the issues and promote recommended safety solutions.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation – railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

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Related Accidents*

Date	Location	Accident ID
June 24, 2011	Miriam, NV	HWY11MH012
February 16, 2012	Chesterfield, NJ	HWY12MH007

*For detailed accident reports visit www.nts.gov

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MOST WANTED LIST

**Critical changes
needed to reduce
transportation
accidents and
save lives.**

