

McClatchy Medical Center

What You Need to Know about ...

Asthma

What is the Rule?

49 CFR Part 391.41 (b)(5) states a person is qualified to drive a motor vehicle who has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with their ability to control and drive a motor vehicle safely.

What are your responsibilities?

Before going to a DOT exam you need to gather the information required by the DOT in able to be certified on that visit. If you do not have the required information then you risk not being able to be certified on that visit and it may take you off the road until the information is gathered or prevent you from being hired.

What is required?

The DOT recommends that if during a routine DOT exam an individual is found to have any one of the following, they should have a PFT and possible further testing:

1. A history of any specific lung disease.
2. Symptoms of shortness of breath (for any reason).
3. Frequent or persistent cough or chest tightness.
4. Wheezing on physical exam.
5. History of smoking 1 ppd and over 35 years of age.
6. History of snoring or daytime somnolence.
7. Objective findings indicating: chronic bronchitis, emphysema, diffuse bronchiectasis, CF, asthma, reactive airway disease.

The DOT states that a driver who exhibits either of the following should not be considered medically qualified:

1. Continual, uncontrolled, symptomatic asthma or,
2. Significant impairment of lung function (FEV₁, less than 65% and significant hypoxemia (PaO₂ of less than 65 mm Hg)).

Ensure that medications are not likely to interfere with ability to drive safely (no precautions about operating equipment or driving).

What you need to bring to the DOT exam?

You must go to your Asthma physician with this information and have him write a letter showing compliance with the above regulations. Many drivers will go to their family doctor to have these tests performed but they must be performed prior to the examination date or you cannot complete the examination.