

Update on “Code W” driver licence indicator for commercial drivers not medically qualified to drive in the US

As reported previously in *OMCA Report*, the commercial driver licence reciprocity agreement between Canada and the U.S. stipulates that Canadian commercial vehicle drivers with specific medical conditions as follows are **not** allowed to drive a commercial bus or truck in the U.S.:

1. Diabetes requiring insulin
2. Hearing impairment
3. Monocular vision
4. Epilepsy/seizure history

Effective May 26, Ontario began issuing new plastic licence cards to the 40,000 Ontario bus and truck drivers affected. The new licences will show a “W” in the “Rest/Cond” field on the front of the licence. The “W” identifies a driver who is not qualified to drive a commercial vehicle in the U.S. This licence indicator will help carriers to ensure they do not dispatch these drivers on U.S. trips.

In view of the large number of licences to be re-issued, MTO is mailing the new cards on a staggered basis between May 26 and July 8, after which all affected drivers will have been mailed a new licence card.

MTO 3-Year driver abstracts will also indicate if a driver has a “Code W” restriction. This will be shown near the bottom of the abstract where the medical due date is indicated. The abstract will say, “CAN OPERATE A COMMERCIAL VEHICLE IN CANADA ONLY”.

Starting with the next Quarterly Licence Status Check, we will be adding the “Code W” to the driver roster template so that drivers with a Code W will come to the carrier’s attention.

Commercial class drivers who have not filed a cyclical medical report and were downgraded to a Class D as a result will also be issued a “Code W”. Class D drivers will be required to file a medical after being downgraded in order to drive in the U.S. in accordance with the Canada/U.S. Medical Reciprocity Agreement for Commercial Drivers. Effective April 1, 2013, all commercial drivers who fail to file their cyclical medical will be downgraded to a Class G. These drivers will need to file a medical in order to upgrade their driver’s licence.