

L34 – Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive

Effective Date: 19 May 2006

Why is fitness to drive important?

Of the many factors that contribute to safety on the road, driver health is an important consideration, and drivers must meet certain medical standards to ensure that their state of health does not increase the risk of a crash. The Registrar of Motor Vehicles therefore has an obligation to the public to ensure that driver licence holders are physically and mentally capable of operating motor vehicles safely.

What is a Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive?

Medical Assessments of Fitness to Drive are carried out by Health Professionals including (but not limited to) Doctors, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Optometrists, to determine whether drivers are capable of operating vehicles safely and competently.

When is Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive required?

Under the provisions of the *Motor Vehicles Act*, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles can direct any licensed driver to undergo a Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive at any time.

Assessments are most commonly required when:

- A licence applicant declares (usually through a medical self assessment) that they have a medical condition that may affect their ability to drive. Drivers are legally responsible for doing this under Section 11 of the *Motor Vehicles Act*,
- A person who is concerned about a Driver's fitness may write to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles identifying the Driver, and outlining his/her concerns. The Registrar will investigate, and take appropriate action as necessary.
- A Health Professional reports an at-risk patient to the Registrar. Health Professionals are legally bound to do this under Section 11 of the *Motor Vehicles Act*.
- The licence includes an "h" (Hire or Reward) or a "d" (Driving Instructor) endorsement. Commercial passenger vehicle drivers and driving instructors are required to undergo a medical examination every 5 years or more frequently if requested by the Registrar.

Please note:

Being assessed or being requested to undertake an assessment does not mean that you automatically lose your licence.

Many drivers found to have medical conditions find that they are permitted to continue to hold a licence to drive – with conditions applied. For example, quite commonly spectacles must be worn when driving, or the driver may be restricted to vehicles fitted with an automatic transmission etc

How is the assessment done?

In all cases, your health professional will be guided in the assessment and subsequent determination of your fitness to drive by the Austroads publication "ASSESSING FITNESS TO DRIVE".

What you need to do

If you are required to undergo a Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive, you should make an appointment with your health professional (who should be familiar with your medical history), indicating the purpose of the examination (to allow appropriate scheduling). You will be responsible for any fees or charges incurred.

Prior to the appointment, you should complete the Patient Questionnaire (attached to Form L2 at the rear of this bulletin) if you are required to do so, or if requested by the examining health professional. Do not sign Your signature must be witnessed by the examining health professional.

You should take the Form L2 and the Patient Questionnaire with you to your appointment with the Health Professional. More information is provided on the rear of Form L2.

What happens after the assessment?

At the end of the examination, your health professional should discuss the outcome and any further issues with you.

Your Health Professional should retain the Patient Questionnaire, Clinical Examination, Test, and Test Results sheets for his/her records. This detailed medical information **is not required** by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles.

Only the front page of Form L2 should be returned to you by the Health Professional. You should then return/deliver this to the Motor Vehicle Registry office.

On receipt of the form, the Registrar will decide what action (if any) will be taken. You should be contacted regarding the outcome of the assessment within 10 working days of the Registrar receiving the completed form.

Contact Details	
Motor Vehicle Registry	
Telephone	1300 654 628
Facsimile	(08) 8999 3103
Email	mvr@nt.gov.au
Web	www.mvr.nt.gov.au
Postal Address	GPO Box 530 Darwin NT 0801

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Department of Planning and Infrastructure

The Registrar of Motor Vehicles has a legal responsibility to ensure that all drivers have the appropriate skills, abilities, and are medically fit to hold a driver licence. To meet this responsibility, legislation gives the Registrar of Motor Vehicles the authority to ask any driver licence holder or applicant to provide medical evidence of their suitability to drive and/or to undergo a driver assessment.

To the Driver/Applicant

- Make an appointment with your medical practitioner.
- As the examination may take longer than a routine consultation, please advise the receptionist when making the appointment that you are attending for this purpose.
- If you wear spectacles, hearing aids etc, please bring them to the examination.
- Take this form to the appointment for your doctor to complete.
- You are required by law to advise the Registrar of Motor Vehicles of any conditions that may affect your ability to drive. You should make the doctor aware of any medical conditions you may have so that your doctor can advise the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, on your behalf, using this form.
- If the medical report has been requested for a particular reason, you should let your practitioner know this reason.
- You should let your doctor know if you hold or are applying for a heavy vehicle or commercial licence, as the medical requirements for drivers of such vehicles are stricter.
- On completion of the examination the doctor will provide you with this form to return to the Motor Vehicle Registry.
- Payment for the medical examination is the responsibility of the licence holder/applicant.
- Withdrawal of Licence – If the Registrar of Motor Vehicles takes away your licence on the basis of a medical report, you may be re-licensed when you provide medical evidence indicating that you now meet the national medical standards. You should be aware that you have the right to seek a review of any decision affecting your licence.
- Any queries regarding licensing may be directed to the Motor Vehicle Registry on 1300 654 628.

To the Health Professional

- The examination must be conducted in accordance with the national medical standards described in Assessing Fitness to Drive 2003.
- This publication is available on written request to Motor Vehicle Registry or via the web: <<http://www.austroads.com.au/aftd>>.
- On completion of the examination please fill in and sign the certificate overleaf.
- You should be aware of the patient's history prior to conducting the examination.
- Distribute the completed certificate as follows:
 1. Hand the original Medical Assessment of Fitness to Drive certificate (together with additional information relevant to the patient's fitness to drive) to the patient to present to the Motor Vehicle Registry.
 2. Retain a copy of the entire L2 package together with your detailed examination notes for the patient's medical record.
- If you have doubts about your patient's suitability to drive, you may suggest a driver assessment or referral to a suitable specialist. Please indicate this in the space provided. If you have any doubts about the information required, or wish to discuss the case personally, please contact the Driver Licence Operations Coordinator on 1300 654 628.
- **Indemnity** – Northern Territory legislation mandates reporting of unfit drivers by health professionals, thereby affording indemnity to practitioners who conduct an examination and provide Driver Licensing Authorities with an opinion based on that examination.
- **Criminal Liability & Insurance** – Health professionals may be liable under civil law in cases where a court forms the opinion that they have not taken reasonable steps to ensure that impaired drivers drive only in circumstances that do not place them and other members of the community at increased risk. Professional indemnity insurers are aware of the potential liability of health professionals and may reasonably expect health professionals to comply with the national medical standards.

Information not relevant to the patient's fitness to drive should **not** be forwarded to the Motor Vehicle Registry.

Occupational Therapy Driver Assessment

- Trained occupational therapists may conduct a driver assessment where there is a medical concern about the patient's ability to drive safely.
- The aim of the occupational therapy assessment is to assist people with impairments to resume or continue driving. There are two components of the assessment.
- The first part of the assessment aims to evaluate the person's difficulties. This involves an interview, vision screen, cognitive function test, assessment of physical strength, motor skills, reaction time, road law and road craft. The need for specialist equipment or vehicle modifications is considered at this time.
- The on-road assessment takes a standard approach but can be designed to meet individual needs. It is conducted in a dual controlled vehicle, accompanied by a driving instructor and where necessary set up with special requirements or modifications to meet the needs of the client. The assessment is structured to assess the impact of injury, illness or the ageing process on driving skills such as judgement, decision-making skills, observation and vehicle handling.
- Provided the overall drive is safe, the 'bad habits' that an experienced driver might display may not result in failure.

Conditions and Restrictions

- If appropriate, the practitioner may recommend conditions, which may enhance driver competency or safety and allow their patient to continue to drive (eg. corrective lenses, no night driving, additional mirrors).
- If the practitioner recommends a licence with conditions, details of the recommended restrictions and reasons must be provided, otherwise a licence will not be considered.
- If the practitioner believes that vehicle modifications are necessary (e.g. hand controls, left foot accelerator), or a prosthesis is necessary to drive safely, or that a local area driving restriction is appropriate, the patient may need to demonstrate the ability to drive safely with these restrictions. In these cases, a driver assessment is necessary.

Motor Vehicle Registry Driver Assessment

- Where there is a concern about a person's ability to drive safely, a driving test may be necessary.
- Assessments of this nature are generally conducted in consultation with an Occupational Therapist trained in this area.

Privacy Statement

The Registrar of Motor Vehicles is required to collect information for registrations, licences and permits under section 92 of the *Motor Vehicles Act*. The Registrar adheres to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's Privacy Statement and the *Information Act*. Further information on privacy can be found at www.dpi.nt.gov.au

Patient Questionnaire

(to be signed in the presence of Health Professional)

To be retained by Health Professional and not returned to Motor Vehicle Registry

IMPORTANT:

This Questionnaire must be completed by driver licence applicants where a medical assessment is routinely required for the class of licence sought, (e.g. Commercial Passenger Vehicle drivers, Driving Instructors etc.), or at the request of the Health Professional.

Name:

Date of Birth

Address:

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Please answer the following questions by ticking the correct box.

If you are not sure of the answer, leave the question blank and ask your health professional what it means.

Your health professional may ask you additional questions during the examination.

	YES	NO
Are you currently being treated by a health professional for any illness or injury?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you receiving any medical treatment or taking any medication (either prescribed or otherwise)? (Please take any medications with you to show the doctor)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ever had, or been told by a doctor that you have had any of the following?		
High blood pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heart disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chest pain, angina	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any condition requiring heart surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palpitations / irregular heart beat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Abnormal shortness of breath	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head injury, spinal injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seizures, fits, convulsions, epilepsy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blackouts, fainting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stroke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dizziness, vertigo, problems with balance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Double vision, difficulty seeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colour blindness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kidney disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neck, back or limb disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearing loss, or deafness, or had an ear operation, or use a hearing aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have difficulty hearing people on the telephone (including use of hearing aid if worn)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had, or been told by a doctor that you had a psychiatric illness, or nervous disorder?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had any other serious injury, illness, operation or been in hospital for any reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ever had, or been told by a doctor that you have had a sleep disorder, sleep apnoea, or narcolepsy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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How likely are you to doze off or fall asleep in the following situations, in contrast to feeling just tired?

Use the following scale to choose the most appropriate number for each situation:

0 = would never doze off
1 = slight chance of dozing
2 = moderate chance of dozing
3 = high chance of dozing

It is important that you put a number (0 to 3) in each of the 8 boxes.

Sitting and reading

Watching TV

Sitting, inactive in a public place (eg: a theatre or meeting)

As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break

Lying down to rest in the afternoon when circumstances permit

Sitting and talking to someone

Sitting quietly after a lunch without alcohol

In a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic

Please tick the answer that is most correct for you.

How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

 Never Monthly Two to four times a month Two or three times a week Four or more times a week

How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking?

 1 or 2 3 to 5 5 to 6 7 to 9 10 or more

How often do you have six or more drinks on one occasion?

 Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?

 Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

How often during the last year have you failed to do what is normally expected from you because of drinking?

 Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

How often during the last year have you needed a first drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?

 Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?

 Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

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How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?

- Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily

Has you or someone else been injured as a result of your drinking?

- No Yes, but not in the last year Yes, during the last year

Has a relative, friend, a doctor, or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested you cut down?

- No Yes, but not in the last year Yes, during the last year

- | | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you use illicit drugs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you use any drugs or medications not prescribed for you by your doctor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Have you been in a vehicle crash since your last licence examination? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If yes, please give details

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Patient's Declaration

(to be signed in the presence of Health Professional)

I,
(Print Name)

certify that to the best of my knowledge the above information supplied by me is true and correct.

Patient's signature:

Witness signature: