

# INFORMATION BULLETIN



March 2, 2023

## FIREFIGHTER DRIVER REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this Information Bulletin (IB) is to clarify firefighter driver requirements, including a tiller operator, when operating firefighting equipment.

Section 12804.11(f) of the California Vehicle Code (CVC) defines firefighting equipment as a “motor vehicle, that meets the definition of a class A or class B vehicle described in subdivision (b) of Section 12804.9 CVC, that is used to travel to and from the scene of an emergency situation, or to transport equipment used in the control of an emergency situation, and that is owned, leased, or rented by, or under the exclusive control of, a federal or state agency, a regularly organized fire department of a city, county, city and county, or district, or a volunteer fire department having official recognition of the city, county, city and county, or district in which the department is located.”

Drivers operating firefighting equipment that does not require a class A or class B license (i.e., has a gross vehicle weight rating [GVWR] or gross vehicle weight [GVW] of 26,000 pounds or less), but that does require an endorsement pursuant to Section 15278 CVC, are required to obtain and maintain, at minimum, a commercial class C license with the appropriate endorsement(s). This requirement is the result of the firefighting equipment definition found in Section 12804.11(f) CVC; it does not include motor vehicles that meet the definition of a class C vehicle. Examples where a commercial class C license with the appropriate endorsement(s) would be needed include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A tank vehicle as defined by Section 15210(r) CVC, with a GVWR or GVW of 26,000 pounds or less.
- A passenger transportation vehicle as defined by Section 464 CVC, with a GVWR or GVW of 26,000 pounds or less.
- A fuel tender with a GVWR or GVW of 26,000 pounds or less, requiring the display of placards pursuant to Section 27903 CVC.



- A vehicle with a GVWR or GVW of 26,000 pounds or less towing a trailer with a GVWR or GVW of 10,000 pounds or less, requiring the display of placards pursuant to Section 27903 CVC.

Pursuant to Section 12804.11(g) CVC, "...a regularly organized fire department, having official recognition of the city, county, city and county, or district in which the department is located, may require an employee or a volunteer of the fire department who is a driver or operator of firefighting equipment to hold a class A or B license." A firefighter who holds a class A or B license would be required to obtain the applicable driver license endorsements for the firefighting equipment they operate pursuant to Section 15278 CVC.

Alternatively, a firefighter may obtain and maintain a firefighter endorsement issued by the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and obtain and maintain a class C license as described in Section 12804.9 CVC, a restricted class A license as described in Section 12804.12 CVC, or a noncommercial class B license as described in Section 12804.10 CVC.

The firefighter endorsement does not allow a driver, when operating vehicles other than firefighting equipment, to:

- Supersede endorsement requirements contained in Section 15278 CVC.
- Operate a vehicle, or combination of vehicles, requiring a class A or class B license.

Additionally, drivers obtaining and maintaining a firefighter endorsement must be trained by an instructor registered with the Office of the State Fire Marshal or other fire department training in accordance with Section 12804.11(b) CVC.

NOTE: The firefighter endorsement, absent reciprocal agreements, is not intended for interstate operations pursuant to Title 49, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 383.3(d).

Firefighting equipment which meets the definition of a regulated vehicle pursuant to Section 34500 CVC, except for subdivision (k), are subject to the applicable regulations contained in Title 13, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Division 2, Chapter 6.5, Motor Carrier Safety. These regulations include the driving proficiency requirements contained in Title 13, CCR, Section 1229. Vehicle examples include, but are not limited to, motortrucks of three or more axles, truck tractors, buses, and a combination of a motortruck and trailer(s) exceeding 40 feet in length when coupled together.

Drivers operating firefighting equipment transporting hazardous materials (e.g., fuel containers, propane cylinders, self-contained breathing apparatus cylinders) are subject to the applicable hazardous materials regulations contained in Title 13, CCR, Chapter 6, Article 3, General Hazardous Materials Regulations, pursuant to Section 34500(g) CVC.



These regulations include the training requirements for hazardous materials transportation contained in Title 13, CCR, Section 1161.7(b).

NOTE: Firefighting equipment utilized to transport hazardous materials may be eligible for the materials of trade exceptions contained in Title 49, Section 173.6 CFR.

Questions regarding this IB may be directed to Commercial Vehicle Section, at (916) 843-3400.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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