

Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program

Quarterly Program Update

End of Fourth Quarter
2023



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

FMCSA's Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program

On January 14, 2022, the Federal Motor Carrier Administration (FMCSA) announced in a Federal Register Notice (FRN) the establishment of the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot (SDAP) Program. The FRN provided the details about the pilot program, including motor carrier, driver, and vehicle requirements.

The SDAP Program allows up to 3,000 apprentices between the ages of 18 and 20 to operate large trucks in interstate commerce at any given time. FMCSA is anticipating up to 1,000 motor carriers may participate to hire these apprentices.

As required by Section 23022 of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), apprentices are required to serve two probationary periods, with an experienced driver in the passenger seat while the apprentice is driving. These probationary periods total at least 400 hours on duty (with at least 240 hours driving time) before being allowed to operate on their own.

The SDAP Program can run for up to three years, during which time the safety records of apprentices will be monitored through monthly data collection activities. Upon conclusion of the pilot program, the collected safety and performance data will be analyzed to determine whether age is a critical safety factor.

Safety is FMCSA’s priority, and the Agency is ensuring that each motor carrier and driver is adhering to the performance standards established by the program. FMCSA has the authority to remove a motor carrier, driver, or end the pilot program if at any time it believes safety is being compromised. The goal of the SDAP Program is to help strengthen the supply chains and assist with driver retention.

The SDAP Program officially launched on July 26, 2022, when FMCSA began accepting applications from interested motor carriers. Data collection on apprentice drivers began in November 2022 and is slated to continue through November 2025.

QUARTERLY UPDATE

This is the fourth public update, which is being provided at the conclusion of the Fourth Quarter, Calendar Year 2023.

Motor Carrier Applications

To date, FMCSA has received 112 motor carrier applications for participation in the pilot program. Of these applications, 34 motor carriers have been fully approved to participate in the program and 38 motor carrier applications have been disapproved due to not meeting FMCSA’s safety performance criteria detailed in the FRN. An additional 36 applications have met FMCSA’s safety qualification criteria (“pre-qualified”), but do not yet have a registered apprenticeship in place or have not yet provided their registered apprenticeship number to FMCSA.

Table 1. Summary of Motor Carrier Applications received to date.

Reporting Period	Number of Disapproved Applications	Number of Applications Pre-Qualified	Number of Applications Approved	Total Number of Applications Received
Fourth Quarter, 2023	38	36	34	112

Experienced Driver Applications

To date, FMCSA has received 81 applications for experienced drivers. These drivers are eligible to be in the passenger seat while an apprentice is operating the CMV during their probationary period.

Table 2. Summary of Experienced Driver Applications received to date.

Reporting Period	Number of Applications Approved	Number of Applications Received	Number of Experienced Drivers Removed for Safety Reasons
Fourth Quarter, 2023	80	81	0

Apprentice Driver Applications

To date, FMCSA has received 36 applications for apprentice drivers, who have all been accepted into the program.

Table 3. Summary of Apprentice Driver Applications received to date.

Reporting Period	Number of Applications Approved	Number of Applications Received	Number of Apprentice Drivers Removed for Safety Reasons
Fourth Quarter, 2023	36	36	1

A summary of the 35 drivers is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Current Participation by Apprentices.

Reporting Period	Total Number of Apprentices who turned 21 (“aged out”)	Total Number of Apprentices who voluntarily left the program	Total Number of Apprentices who completed both Probationary Periods ¹	Number of Apprentices Currently Enrolled in Probationary Periods
Fourth Quarter, 2023	3	5	13	14

¹ This is the number of apprentice drivers who have completed both probationary periods but are still under the current regulatory age of 21 for operating in interstate commerce. They may operate solo in interstate commerce (no experienced driver required) but are still operating under special approval as part of this program.