

## Occupational Health among Iranian Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers

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**Date of Submission:** Sep 22, 2013

**Date of Acceptance:** May 09, 2014

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**How to cite this article:** Saberi HR, Shanbeh M, Naseri Esfahani AH. Occupational Health among Iranian Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers. *Int J Prev Med* 2014;5:1346-47.

### DEAR EDITOR,

We read with interest the study on visual fitness of Iranian drivers recently published in the *IJPM*.<sup>[1]</sup> Considering the large number of professional drivers (>700,000),<sup>[2,3]</sup> and the abundant number of road traffic accidents in Iran,<sup>[3]</sup> which has attracted specific attention in recent years, the above-mentioned study is both important and interesting. However, some complementary information may be helpful.

Somewhere in the article, it has been stated that: “Annually, vehicles are subjected to Ministry of Transport testing after the first 3 years of registration, but it is not necessary for the drivers to have a similar test at least every few years,” while besides the necessary medical evaluations for obtaining driving licenses, on the base of common instructions between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, periodic health examination for professional drivers is mandatory all around the country including Kerman province.<sup>[4]</sup> This is a team work evaluation conducted by occupational medicine specialists and general practitioners trained for these examinations. One of the main parts of these examinations is visual fitness evaluation, which is performed by either an optometrist or trained physician using Snellen Chart and Vision Screener.

If any further evaluation is needed the drivers are referred to ophthalmologists. These are carrying on every other year for those under the age of 40 and annually after that. Without these credits police will prevent professional driving.<sup>[4]</sup>

In another part of the article, some of the visual criteria for obtaining the driving licenses are brought. In addition to these criteria, more comprehensive standards are applied in Iran for “professional” drivers which are shown in Table 1.<sup>[4]</sup> Although stereoscopic vision evaluation is an important, but usually neglected issue for visual fitness evaluation of forklift drivers.

All of the diabetic (either type one or two) professional drivers must be also evaluated for diabetic retinopathy each year or every 2 years on the base of their age, before accreditation of their health license, as well.<sup>[4]</sup>

From the starting time of this process in 2004 until 2010, 2181 drivers have forbidden from a professional driving because their findings was not complied with the above-mentioned criteria, 87% of which has been visual problems.<sup>[2]</sup>

The interesting point in Iranian national health standards for professional drivers is that at least for visual fitness, it is more restricting than many of the international standards, e.g. CCMTA 2011,<sup>[5]</sup> AFTD 2012,<sup>[6]</sup> DVLA 2013,<sup>[7]</sup> and British Columbia

**Table 1:** Visual fitness criteria for Iranian commercial motor vehicle drivers

	<b>Professional drivers with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade driving license or motorcycle license</b>	<b>Professional drivers with 1<sup>st</sup> grade driving license, first aid vehicles or fuel and chemicals transportation vehicles</b>
Visual acuity	Visual acuity of $\geq 12/10$ in both eyes with/without correction	Visual acuity of $\geq 14/10$ in both eyes with or without correction and acuity of $\geq 1/20$ without correction in the diseased eye
Decreased visual field	Visual field of more than $120^\circ$ in the horizontal plane	Visual field of more than $120^\circ$ in the horizontal plane
Impaired color vision	-	Differentiating the three colors green, red, and yellow during an use test
Monocular vision	Not permitted	Not permitted
Uncorrected diplopia	Not permitted	Not permitted

2010 (updated May 2013).<sup>[8]</sup> We think that this may be due to the differences in cultural, economic, and social factors as well as the higher rates of accidents in Iranian roads.

In addition to the aforementioned items, from 2010 all of the Iranian commercial motor vehicle drivers must pass a short educational course of occupational health and safety at the beginning of their activity and every year then after. This course has been arranged in a multidisciplinary approach by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Road and Urban Development and police department and is conducted by the occupational medicine specialists or trained general practitioners.<sup>[3]</sup>

The final and key point in this regard is planning to provide appropriate facilities for transient or permanent retirement, training or employment

in other works for those who cannot obtain the certificate for professional driving. This needs better interdisciplinary approach and social security support.

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**Source of Support:** Nil **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.