

Office of the Fire Commissioner



Driver's License Requirements for Tandem Axle Fire Service Vehicles

Date Issued: January 27, 2026

The Office of the Fire Commissioner is pleased to confirm that through consultation with Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI), it has been reaffirmed that individuals holding a Class 4 driver's license, along with a valid air brake endorsement, **are** authorized to operate fire apparatus including tandem axle trucks.

Additionally, trailers exceeding 4,540kg, which would typically require a Class 3 license, may be towed under a Class 4 license—provided the towing vehicle is designated as an emergency vehicle.

Departments are responsible for ensuring those working on the departments are appropriately licensed as outlined above. We trust this clarification helps ensure departments can confidently assign drivers while remaining compliant with licensing requirements.

Relevant and applicable legislation can be found in Appendix A as attached.

Any questions can be directed to Community Support at: firecomm@gov.mb.ca

Appendix A

1. Definition of “Emergency Vehicle” (HTA s. 1(1))

- a. Pursuant to section 1(1) of the Highway Traffic Act (C.C.S.M. c. H60), an “emergency vehicle” is expressly defined to include fire trucks.

2. Licensing Classification – MPI Class 4 Requirement

- a. MPI designates Class 4 driver’s licenses as the required class of license for the operation of “ambulances and other emergency vehicles.”
- b. Accordingly, a Class 4 driver’s license constitutes sufficient authority to operate any emergency vehicle, regardless of whether such operation occurs during an emergency or for non-emergency purposes.
- c. This principle applies regardless of vehicle configuration. Even where a fire truck is a tandem-axle truck, which under ordinary circumstances would require a Class 3 driver’s license, its classification as an emergency vehicle governs the licensing requirement. Thus, a Class 4 driver’s license remains the correct class for the operation of an emergency vehicle, irrespective of axle count.

3. Air Brake Endorsement Requirement

- a. Where the emergency vehicle is equipped with air brakes, the operator must additionally hold the Air Brake Endorsement. As set out in the MPI Driver’s Handbook: “Air Brake Endorsement permits the holder to drive vehicles equipped with air brakes in the class of vehicle for which the person is licensed.”
- b. The emergency vehicle designation does not exempt a driver from the air brake requirement, as the braking system determines the necessity of the endorsement, not the vehicles’ purpose or use.
- c. The only exception to the air brake endorsement requirement applies to Class 3 trucks registered as farm trucks. There is no equivalent exemption for emergency vehicles, which remain fully subject to the endorsement requirement.