

Publication Date: June 25, 2009
Effective: June 25, 2009 through November 21, 2009
Hearing Date: September 8, 2009

**ORDER OF THE STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
ADOPTING EMERGENCY RULES**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation adopts an emergency order amending TRANS 315.03(1)(a) and (c), relating to safety belt medical use exemption.

Analysis Prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Statutes interpreted: s. 347.48(2m)(e), Stats.

Statutory authority: ss. 84.015, 84.41(7) and 347.48(2m)(e), Stats.

Explanation of agency authority: Current law requires every person over 8 years of age to be properly restrained by a safety belt whenever traveling in a motor vehicle. Current law allows the Department to exempt from this safety belt use requirement any person who, because of a physical or medical condition, cannot properly be restrained in a safety belt. Department rules authorize physicians, chiropractors and Christian Science practitioners to grant exemptions from wearing safety belts. Federal law makes highway safety grant moneys available for safety belt use requirements, but federal law recognizes only medical exemptions issued by physicians. Federal grant moneys expire on July 1, 2009, and this state may not qualify for approximately \$15,000,000 in federal moneys if persons other than physicians are authorized to exempt persons from safety belt use laws.

Related statute or rule: 23 USC 406, 71 Fed. Reg. 4196 (Jan. 25, 2006).

Plain language analysis: This rule making deletes authority of any person other than physicians to exempt persons from safety belt use requirements. This rule making will result in increased use of safety belts, and increase receipt of federal moneys for highway safety activities.

Summary of, and preliminary comparison with, existing or proposed federal regulation: Federal policy states that safety belt use requirements do not apply to, “Persons with medical conditions who are unable to use a safety belt, provided there is written documentation from a physician.” The Department’s current rules go further by allowing chiropractors and Christian Science practitioners to grant those exemptions.

Comparison with Rules in Adjacent States:

Michigan: Mich. Comp. Laws. Annot. 257.710e(1)(e) exempts a person who possesses a written statement from a physician from safety belt use requirements. The Department was unable to identify any administrative rules on this topic.

Minnesota: Minn. Stats. Annot. § 169.686 (2)(3) allows physicians to exempt persons from safety belt use requirements. The Department was unable to identify any administrative rules on this topic.

Illinois: 92 IL Admin. Code 1030.84 exempts from safety belt use requirements only to a person “possessing a written statement from a physician that the person is unable, for medical or physical reasons, to wear a seat safety belt.”

Iowa: IA Admin. Code 761-600.16(321) authorizes physicians and chiropractors to exempt a person from safety belt use requirements for medical reasons. The Department identified no authority for Christian Science practitioners to exempt persons from safety belt use requirements.

Summary of factual data and analytical methodologies used and how the related findings support the regulatory approach chosen: None. NHTSA legal counsel informed the Department that in order to qualify for funds under 23 USC 406, any administrative rule that exempts a person from safety belt use requirements must be consistent with the medical exemption permitted in the implementing guidelines for section 406 eligibility. Those guidelines limit the exemption to physicians.

Analysis and supporting documentation used to determine effect on small businesses: This rule making has no effect on small businesses.

Effect on small business: This rule making will eliminate one issue of noncompliance specifically identified by NHTSA that makes Wisconsin ineligible for approximately \$15,000,000 in federal safety belt use grant moneys. The Department's Regulatory Review Coordinator may be contacted by e-mail at ralph.sanders@wisconsin.gov, or by calling (414) 438-4585.

Fiscal effect and anticipated costs incurred by private sector: The Department estimates that there will be no fiscal impact on the liabilities or revenues of any county, city, village, town, school district, vocational, technical and adult education district, sewerage district, or federally-recognized tribes or bands. The Department estimates that there will be no fiscal impact on state or private sector revenues or liabilities.

Copies of emergency rule: Requests for copies of the emergency rule should be submitted to Laura Andreasson, Department of Transportation, Division of State Patrol, Room 551, P. O. Box 7936, Madison, WI 53707-7936. You may also contact Ms. Andreasson by phone at (608) 267-5136.

To view or print a copy of the emergency rule, you may visit the following website:
<http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/library/research/law/rulenotices.htm>.

TEXT OF EMERGENCY RULE

SECTION 1. Trans 315.03(1)(a) and (c) are amended to read:

Trans 315.03(1)(a) The person has a written statement signed by a licensed physician, ~~chiropractor or a Christian Science practitioner residing in this state and listed in the Christian Science Journal~~ indicating the person cannot be restrained by a safety belt because of a physical or medical condition, or words to that effect.

Trans 315.03(1)(c) The statement in par. (a) contains an address and telephone number of the physician, ~~chiropractor, or Christian Science practitioner.~~

(END OF RULE TEXT)

FINDING OF EMERGENCY

The Department of Transportation finds that an emergency exists and that the attached rule is necessary for the immediate preservation of public health and safety. Current federal law at 23 USC 406 provides safety belt performance grants to a state that has in effect and is enforcing a conforming primary safety belt use law for all passenger motor vehicles. A grant of federal funds estimated at roughly \$15,000,000 are available if this state is eligible on or before September 30, 2009; a secondary grant based on "share of unallocated funds," estimated at not more than \$1,000,000, may be available if this state is eligible on or before June 30, 2009. The Wisconsin Legislature is currently deliberating a primary safety belt use law as part of the executive biennial budget bill, 2009 Assembly Bill 75, with the aim of qualifying for safety belt performance grants. Were the law timely enacted, this state could remain ineligible for safety belt performance grants because Department rules allow persons other than physicians to grant medical exemptions from safety belt use requirements. Immediate action is necessary to avoid forfeiting approximately \$16,000,000 in federal funds for highway safety activities. Increased use of safety belts has been shown to reduce the severity of injuries sustained in motor vehicle collisions, and limiting the medical use exemption to physicians would increase use of safety belts.