

Date of Hearing: April 20, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

AB 1913 (Soria) – As Amended March 19, 2026

SUBJECT: Licensure: emergency equipment

SUMMARY: Authorizes an employee or volunteer registered with a specified law enforcement agency to operate emergency equipment under a class C driver's license if they have completed emergency equipment training. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Authorizes an employee of, or a volunteer registered with, a specified law enforcement agency, to operate emergency equipment pursuant to this bill.
- 2) Requires an employee or volunteer described above, in order to operate emergency equipment, to complete training that includes all of the following:
 - a) A classroom portion of at least 16 hours taught by an instructor who meets or exceeds the standards adopted by the specified law enforcement agency for the operation of emergency equipment.
 - b) A driver training portion of at least 14 hours that includes directly-supervised behind-the-wheel training by an instructor approved by the specified law enforcement agency, and who possesses a minimum of five years of experience as an emergency vehicle operator.
 - c) A written emergency equipment operation examination.
- 3) Requires instructors for the training program to meet both of the following requirements:
 - a) Possess a valid California class A or class B license, or alternatively, possess a class C license having completed the emergency equipment operation training under this bill and possessing at least five years of experience operating emergency equipment.
 - b) Be certified as a qualified training instructor or training officer by the State of California, the federal government, or a county training officers' association.
- 4) Requires a training program participant to possess a valid California class C license.
- 5) Defines "emergency equipment," for purposes of the above, to mean a motor vehicle operated under a class A or class B driver's license (which includes a combination of vehicles if a towed vehicle has a gross weight exceeding 10,000 pounds, a vehicle towing more than one vehicle, a trailer bus, all class B and C vehicles, a vehicle with a gross weight exceeding 26,000 pounds, a single vehicle with three or more axles, as specified, a bus with a gross weight exceeding 26,000 pounds, except a trailer bus, a farm labor vehicle, a single vehicle with three or more axles or with a gross weight exceeding 26,000 pounds towing another vehicle with a gross weight of 10,000 or less, a house car over 40 feet, as specified, and all class C vehicles) that is used to travel to and from the scene of an emergency situation, to and from a place where emergency equipment is repaired or repositioned or to transport equipment used in the control of an emergency situation and that is owned, leased, rented by, or under the exclusive control of a specified law enforcement agency.

- 6) Expands the definition of a class C motor vehicle to include emergency equipment, as defined above, provided the equipment is operated by a person who has completed the emergency equipment training established by this bill.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires an applicant for a driver's license to submit to an examination appropriate to the type of motor vehicle or combination of vehicles the application desires a license to drive. (Vehicle Code (VEH) 12804.9(b))
- 2) Provides that a class A vehicle includes the following: a combination of vehicles if a vehicle being towed has a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds, a vehicle towing more than one vehicle, a trailer bus, and the operation of all vehicles under class B and class C. (VEH 12804.9 (b)(1))
- 3) Provides that a class B vehicle includes the following: a single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 26,000 pounds, single vehicle with three or more axles, as specified, a bus with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 26,000 pounds, except a trailer bus, a farm labor vehicle, a single vehicle with three or more axles or a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 26,000 pounds towing another vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less, a house car over 40 feet in length, and the operation of all vehicles covered under class C. (VEH 12804.9 (b)(2).)
- 4) Provides that a class C vehicle includes the following: a two-axle vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,000 pounds or less, as specified, a two-axle vehicle weighing 4,000 pounds or more unladen when towing a trailer coach not exceeding 9,000 pounds, a house car of 40 feet in length or less, a three-axle vehicle weighing 6,000 pounds gross or less, a house car of 40 feet in length or less or a vehicle towing another vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less, a two-axle vehicle weighing 4,000 pounds or more unladen when towing either a trailer coach or a fifth-wheel travel trailer not exceeding 10,000 pounds gross vehicle weight rating, as specified, a two-axle vehicle weighing 4,000 pounds or more unladen when towing a fifth-wheel travel trailer exceeding 10,000 pounds, but not exceeding 15,000 pounds, as specified, a vehicle or combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating of 26,000 pounds or less, as specified, firefighting equipment, provided that the equipment is operated by a person who holds a firefighter endorsement, as specified; a motorized scooter, a bus with a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,000 pounds or less, except a trailer bus. (VEH 12804.9 (b)(3))
- 5) Authorizes certain volunteer firefighters to operate firefighting equipment, as follows:
 - a) Specifies that to operate firefighting equipment, a driver, including a till operator, must do either of the following:
 - i) Obtain and maintain a class A or B license, as specified, and, as appropriate, for the size and configuration of the firefighting equipment operated. (VEH 12804.11 (a)(2))
 - ii) Obtain and maintain a firefighter endorsement issued by the DMV and obtain and maintain a class C license, a restricted class A license, as specified, or a noncommercial class B license, as specified. (VEH 12804.11 (a)(1))

- b) Provides that to qualify for a firefighter endorsement, the driver shall:
- i) Provide the DMV with proof of current employment as a firefighter or registration as a volunteer firefighter and evidence of fire equipment operation training, as specified, subject to the following:
 - (1) Evidence of fire equipment operation training means the applicant successfully completed Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator 1A taught by an instructor registered with the Office of the State Fire Marshal or fire department driver training that meets certain requirements, including at least 16 hours of classroom instruction and at least 14 hours of directly supervised behind-the-wheel driver training.
 - (2) Requires driver training to be conducted by a person who is registered with the Office of the State Fire Marshal to instruct a Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator 1A course, or by another person who possesses a minimum of five years of fire service experience, possesses a valid California class A or B license or a class A or B license restricted to the operation of firefighting equipment or a class C license with a firefighter endorsement, and is certified as a qualified training instructor or training officer, as specified.
 - ii) Pass the written firefighter examination developed by the DMV with the cooperation of the Office of the State Fire Marshal.
 - iii) Upon application and every two years thereafter, submit medical information on a form approved by the DMV. (VEH 12804.11(a) & (b))
- c) Subjects a driver of firefighting equipment to the requirement to obtain a firefighter endorsement or a class A or B license, as specified, if both the following conditions exist:
- i) The equipment is operated by a person employed as a firefighter by a federal or state agency, by a regularly organized fire department of a city, county, city and county, or district, or by a tribal fire department or registered as a volunteer member of a regularly organized fire department having official recognition of the city, county, city and county, or district in which the department is located, or of a tribal fire department.
 - ii) The motor vehicle 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 which 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, a volunteer fire department having official recognition of the city, county, city and county, or district in which the department is located, or a tribal fire department. (VEH 12804.11(d))
- d) Defines “firefighting equipment” to mean a motor vehicle, that meets the definition of a class A or class B vehicle, 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. (VEH 12804.11(f))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: The California DMV issues various types of driver's licenses based on vehicle type and purpose, mainly class C (standard), Commercial (class A, B, C), and Motorcycle (Class M1/M2). A class C is the standard driver's license, and it is the most common license for driving cars, SUVs, pickup trucks, and some minivans. It allows driving 2-axle vehicles with a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) of 26,000 lbs. or less.

A commercial driver's license (CDL) is required for operating heavy vehicles (over 26,000 lbs.), passenger buses, or vehicles transporting hazardous materials. A class A CDL is required for combinations of vehicles (e.g., tractor-trailers) with a GVWR over 26,000 lbs., where the towed vehicle is over 10,000 lbs. A class B CDL is required for a single vehicle with a GVWR over 26,000 lbs. (e.g., box trucks, city buses, dump trucks). Finally, a class C CDL is used for vehicles transporting hazardous materials or designated passenger vehicles.

Most Californians have a class C driver's license. However, much of the equipment needed when responding to an emergency situation requires a class A or B driver's license. This type of equipment may include heavy trailers or specialty equipment such as snowcats/ bearcat which ordinarily require an operator to possess a class A or B driver license. This requirement can reduce the pool of people available to operate this equipment and subsequently respond. Sheriffs' offices struggle with recruiting sworn and non-sworn (volunteers) personnel, especially those with class A or B driver licenses.

Current law permits volunteer firefighters to operate certain firefighting equipment with a class C license that would ordinarily require a class A and B driver's license if they complete specified training. This training allows these volunteers to receive a firefighter endorsement, which accompanies a class C driver license, in lieu of a class A or B driver license.

Similar to the firefighter endorsement framework, the training in this bill must include 16 hours of classroom instruction taught by an instructor who meets the standards adopted by the law enforcement agency, 14 hours of directly supervised behind-the-wheel training by an approved instructor with at least five years of experience as an emergency vehicle operator, and a written emergency equipment operation examination. Training instructors must possess a valid class A or B license, or a class C license if they have completed the emergency equipment operation training established by this bill and possess at least five years of experience operating emergency equipment. Additionally, instructors must be certified as a qualified training instructor or officer by the state, federal government, or a county training officers' association.

Committee comments. Emergency situations arise without notice. Law enforcement agencies may not always have a staff person who possesses a class A or B license present at the time of an emergency. In addition, it can be challenging for law enforcement agencies to recruit sworn personnel and volunteers with class A and B driver's licenses.

This bill creates an alternative avenue for employees or volunteers with law enforcement agencies to become qualified to operate emergency equipment through training rather than obtaining a class A or B license. This would expand the pool of eligible drivers within a law

enforcement agency to transport certain heavy-duty vehicles to and from the scene of an emergency.

According to the author. “While effective law enforcement and public safety protection often requires the use of specialized vehicles, many law enforcement staff and volunteers do not possess a class A or B driver license that would normally be required to operate this equipment. AB 1913 will allow law enforcement staff and volunteers to operate specified emergency equipment with a class C driver license having completed a rigorous course of training. This bill will protect public safety by allowing more qualified individuals to operate certain equipment without a specific type of commercial driver license without sacrificing training and education on the part of the operators.”

Arguments in support. According to the sponsor’s of this bill, the California State Sheriffs’ Association states, “In many counties, deputy sheriffs and sheriff’s office volunteers are often among the first to be called to emergency scenes, including wildfires, search and rescues, vehicle accidents, and natural disasters. Special equipment is normally needed to mitigate the effects of these emergency incidents and save lives. These employees and volunteers may be asked to operate specialty equipment including mobile command posts and vehicles that transport other equipment on heavy trailers. Much of this equipment ordinarily requires an operator to possess a class A or B driver license, which reduces the pool of people available to operate this equipment and subsequently respond. Sheriffs’ offices struggle with recruiting sworn and non-sworn personnel (volunteers), especially those with class A or B driver licenses.”

“AB 1913 creates a common-sense solution to this problem. The bill allows employees or volunteers who have a class C license and complete classroom education and behind-the-wheel training provided by trained instructors to operate certain types of equipment in specified situations without having to obtain a class A or B license. This approach also carries the benefit of ensuring operators are trained and experienced without creating expensive new licensing or certification burdens on state agencies.”

Previous and related legislation. SB 287 (Grove), Chapter 610, Statutes of 2021, authorized drivers with a class C driver's license with a trailer endorsement to tow a trailer between 10,000 and 15,000 pounds gross vehicle weight using a gooseneck trailer hitch if the towing is not for compensation or commercial purposes and the vehicle used to tow the vehicle is a two axle-vehicle with a combined gross vehicle weight rating of less than 26,000 pounds.

AB 2438 (Lowenthal), Chapter 97, Statutes of 2014, allowed an individual who is training a firefighter how to use firefighting equipment (e.g., to drive a fire engine) to possess a class C license with a firefighter endorsement, provided they meet all other statutory requirements

AB 82 (Jeffries), Chapter 92, Statutes of 2011, required a person who operates firefighting equipment to obtain either a class A or B license as appropriate for the size and configuration of the firefighting equipment or a class C license, a restricted class A license, or a noncommercial class B license with a firefighter endorsement.

AB 1648 (Jeffries), Chapter 360, Statutes of 2010, changed the type of driver’s license required to operate firefighting equipment from a class A or B commercial driver’s license or a restricted firefighting license to a class C license with a firefighter endorsement and allows a person

without such an endorsement to operate firefighting equipment for training purposes during non-emergencies provided the driver is accompanied by a properly licensed driver.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Sheriffs' Association (sponsor)
California Police Chiefs Association

Opposition

None on file

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