

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)

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 this bill, to mean a motor vehicle or combination of vehicles that meets the definition of a class A or class B vehicle, as specified, subject to the following limitations:
 - a) The motor vehicle shall not exceed 45 feet in length, and the towed vehicle, if applicable, shall not exceed 30,000 pounds gross vehicle weight or gross vehicle weight rating, whichever is greater.
 - b) The motor vehicle or combination of vehicles shall be 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) Specifies that an authorized emergency vehicle that has been issued a license by the Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol to operate in response to emergency calls is not "emergency equipment."
- 7) Specifies that vehicles operated pursuant to this bill are not exempt from the provisions of Division 15 of the Vehicle Code, which, among other things, establishes requirements related to the size, weight, and load of vehicles.
- 8) 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.

COMMENTS:

- 1) *Purpose of the bill.* 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.”

- 2) *Commercial driver’s licenses.* In California a basic driver’s license is known as a class C driver’s license. With it a driver can operate a standard vehicle or truck for personal use on California roadways. It also allows for towing smaller, lighter weight trailers not for compensation. In order to operate or tow larger vehicles and trailers, a driver needs a commercial driver’s license (CDL). Federal law requires each state to have minimum standards for licensing of commercial drivers. California has developed licensing and testing requirements for drivers of commercial vehicles that equal or exceed federal standards. There are three classes of CDLs:
 - a) Commercial A: Any legal combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 26,001 pounds or more, provided the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of the vehicle(s) being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.
 - b) Commercial B: Any single vehicle with a GVWR of more than 26,000 pounds, any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR, or a 3-axle vehicle weighing over 6,000 pounds.
 - c) Commercial C: Used for the operation of buses with a GVWR of 26,000 pounds or less, to transport hazardous materials, and used to transport large tanks carrying liquids or gaseous materials.

Getting a CDL can be an arduous process that involves a knowledge test, medical examination, driver’s history check, identity verification, permit process, skills test (including a road test), minimum hours of behind-the-wheel training, payment of various fees, and the successful completion of Entry Level Driver Training conducted by a registered training provider.¹ The California State Sheriffs’ Association, the sponsors of this bill, contend that some law enforcement agencies struggle to find employees and volunteers with CDLs to operate or tow emergency equipment which falls into the CDL category.

- 3) *This bill is modeled after the firefighter endorsement.* In order to avoid the arduous CDL process for the operation of firefighting equipment, the Legislature passed AB 1648 (Jeffries, Chapter 360) in 2010. That bill created California’s firefighter endorsement, which is a special certification added to a

¹ [DL 650, California Commercial Driver Handbook](#)

driver's license that authorizes employees or volunteers of fire departments to drive firefighting equipment that would typically require a class A or B CDL. To qualify for a firefighter endorsement, an applicant must meet specific training, testing, and employment requirements.

- 4) *Operating emergency equipment for a law enforcement agency.* Similar to fire departments, some law enforcement agencies rely on employees and volunteers to operate the departments' large emergency equipment, but struggle to find employees and volunteers with CDLs. According to the California State Sheriffs' Association, "[t]hese 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." Supporters of the bill also emphasize that smaller, resource-constrained law enforcement agencies in particular struggle to recruit individuals with CDLs.

Under this bill, law enforcement agency employees and volunteers would be able to complete a classroom and behind-the-wheel training program, and subsequent examination, to allow them to operate the agency's emergency equipment. Emergency equipment is defined as vehicles that meet the definition of a class A or class B vehicle (see CDL classification above), with the following limitations:

- a) The motor vehicle may not exceed 45 feet in length and the towed vehicle, if applicable, may not exceed 30,000 pounds gross vehicle weight or gross vehicle weight rating, whichever is greater; and,
 - b) The motor vehicle must be used to travel to and from the scene of an emergency situation, to travel to and from a place where the emergency equipment is repaired or repositioned, or to transport equipment that is used in an emergency situation and that is owned or leased by a law enforcement agency.
- 5) *Training requirements.* This bill lays out specific training requirements an applicant must meet to qualify to operate the emergency equipment. The training must include:

- a) A classroom portion of at least 16 hours taught by an instructor who meets or exceeds the standards adopted by the 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 law enforcement agency who possesses a minimum of five years of experience as an emergency vehicle operator.
- c) A written emergency equipment operation examination.

The instructors for the training program must possess a valid California class A or class B commercial driver's license, or, alternatively, they can have a class C license with the certification authorized under this bill if they 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.

- 6) *Double referral.* This bill has been double referred to the Senate Public Safety Committee.

RELATED/PREVIOUS 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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

POSITIONS: (Communicated to the committee before noon on Wednesday, June 17, 2026.)

SUPPORT:

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

OPPOSITION:

None received.

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