

Sleep Apnea Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why is NS Initiating the Screening Process?

Employees have been required by longstanding rules and policies to report new diagnoses of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Previously, all newly diagnosed employees who worked in safety-sensitive positions were not permitted to work if they failed to timely provide documentation establishing that their condition was appropriately treated and controlled.

The NTSB has recently encouraged railroads to independently develop further measures to actively screen for OSA amongst employees in safety-sensitive positions in Safety Recommendation R-16-45. This recommendation was the direct result of a 2014 head-on collision between two trains in Arkansas. Additionally, on September 21, 2017, NTSB released documents from a probe into the recent New Jersey Transit and Long Island Railroad accidents revealing that the engineers in both accidents were diagnosed, after the accident, with severe sleep apnea. In response to this safety critical issue and NTSB's recommendation, NS made the decision to initiate a screening process for safety-sensitive employees for OSA.

The decision to require OSA screening for safety-sensitive employees with a predisposition for OSA is based on extensive medical research and published evidence-based guidelines which link Body Mass Index (BMI) above certain levels, as well as other risk factors, to such a predisposition. BMI is a mathematical calculation based on height and weight.

Who Will be Screened?

Effective November 1, information regarding BMI, obtained during periodic recertification or CDL physicals, will be reviewed to determine if screening for OSA will be required. Specifically,

- Employees with a BMI between greater than or equal to 33 and less than 40, and who have three or more of the eleven risk factors for OSA (i.e. hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, etc.) – or –
- Employees with a BMI of 40 or greater, regardless of other risk factors

will be required to complete an at-home sleep study screening, unless Norfolk Southern Health Services (NSHS) has been previously advised of and received medical documentation regarding an OSA diagnosis.

What Is The Notification Process?

Employees will be notified by company email from NSHS and its vendor, Rocky Mountain Sleep Disorder Center (RMSDC), followed by a letter from NSHS via US mail (and company email), if they are required to take the at-home screening, which will be paid for by NS.

The follow-up letter from NSHS provides employees with the specific factors from their physicals that identified them as having a predisposition for OSA, instructions on required follow-up, contact information for their NSHS case coordinator, and a 30-day deadline to schedule and complete their at-home screening.

Employees who are required to complete the sleep study screening will follow the instructions in their company email provided by NSHS and RMSDC to schedule delivery of their at-home sleep study kit and may obtain assistance from RMSDC or their NSHS case coordinators for any questions regarding the screening process.

What does The Screening Process Entail?

Importantly, employees will remain in service during the screening process provided they timely complete the process.

Contact with RMSDC will prompt the mailing of and receipt of a screening kit (via FedEx). Employees should take care in opening the kit, as the packaging will be utilized for return (postage paid by NS).

The kit will contain instructions, paperwork, screening apparatus, and a chain-of-custody bracelet. RMSDC must visually verify employees affixing the bracelet to their wrist prior to initiating the overnight (one sleep period) sleep study. This observation/verification for chain-of-custody purposes can be completed with RMSDC (available 24/7) via Face Time or Skype, unless the employee chooses to go to a designated medical facility to have the bracelet affixed. The bracelet should not be worn at work. A RMSDC representative is available to assist employees around-the-clock as necessary.

Upon completion of the screening, the employee will place all of the equipment back in the kit, including the completed paperwork, and return the kit via FedEx by using the return shipping label contained in the kit (postage paid by NS).

The study will be interpreted by a sleep specialist at RMSDC who will then provide all results to NSHS.

How will Employees be notified of their Screening results?

For those employees whose results indicate a diagnosis of OSA, NSHS will advise them via letter and email of the next steps for obtaining evaluation and treatment through their personal physician as covered under their health insurance plans. Employees will have up to 45 days to obtain treatment, demonstrate compliance with their treatment and control of their condition, and furnish the required documentation to NSHS. Employees, except for those with severe cases of OSA, will remain in service provided they complete the aforementioned requirements within the 45-day deadline. As always, employees' NSHS medical case coordinator will be available to assist them with any questions they may have.

If an employee's results are within a normal range, NSHS will notify the employee of this result. If there are no other pending medical information needs, the employee's certification/qualification will be updated through normal channels.

Who should Questions be directed to?

Employees should direct questions regarding the screening process and required treatment documentation to their NSHS medical case coordinator.

To: All Train & Engine Employees and CDL Holders

At Norfolk Southern, the safety of employees and the communities in which we operate are top priorities. As such, NS' current and longstanding practice is to require employees to report new diagnoses of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Under this existing practice, employees working in safety-sensitive positions who reported an OSA diagnosis were required to provide documentation that confirmed compliance with treatment and control of their condition.

In Safety Recommendation R-16-45, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently encouraged railroads to independently develop further measures to actively screen for OSA for employees in safety-sensitive positions. This recommendation was the result of a 2014 head-on collision between two trains in Arkansas. Additionally, on September 21, 2017, NTSB released documents from a probe into the recent New Jersey Transit and Long Island Railroad accidents revealing that the engineers in both accidents were diagnosed, after the accident, with severe sleep apnea. In response to this safety critical issue, NS has explored additional options for identifying current employees who should be screened for OSA. Based on an extensive review of medical research and published evidence-based guidelines, which establish that individuals with certain risk factors, including a Body Mass Index (BMI) above certain levels, have a predisposition for OSA, NS has determined, going forward, to require OSA screening for certain employees with these risk factors.

Accordingly, **effective November 1 for employees who undergo periodic-recertification or CDL physicals**, Norfolk Southern Health Services (NSHS) will begin reviewing information regarding BMI and other OSA risk factors provided during such physicals to determine if OSA screening will be required. Employees with a BMI greater than or equal to 33 but less than 40 who have three (3) or more other risk factors for OSA (e.g., hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, etc.) will be required to undergo an at-home sleep screening. Employees with a BMI greater than or equal to 40 also will be required to undergo an at-home sleep screening, regardless of the presence of other risk factors. Screening will not be required for individuals who have already been diagnosed with OSA and who have disclosed such diagnosis to NSHS, though such individuals are still required to demonstrate treatment and control upon disclosure of their diagnosis.

Should it be determined that you must undergo a sleep screening, you will be contacted to make arrangements to secure your at-home sleep screening kit. This at-home sleep screening will be paid for by Norfolk Southern, and employees will remain in service during this screening process provided they timely comply with the process.

Employees whose screening reveals a diagnosis of OSA will be notified of the next steps to secure treatment and demonstrate control of their condition. During the treatment process, employees, except those with severe cases of OSA, will remain in service provided they timely obtain treatment and provide NSHS with documentation demonstrating control of their condition through compliance with treatment. Any costs associated with treatment will be handled as provided by your health insurance plan.

Individuals who are required to be evaluated may direct questions regarding the screening process and required treatment documentation to their assigned NSHS Medical Case Coordinator.

Mike Wheeler
Executive Vice President & Chief Operation Officer