

(4) Should DOT continue to require Class I carriers of property to submit quarterly reports (Form QFR)?

(5) Should DOT eliminate or add specific line items in the annual report (Form M) and, if so, which specific line items should be eliminated/added?

(6) If your company is subject to the current Form M reporting requirements, what is the annual cost for your company to comply with those requirements? Please explain, in detail, how you calculated this total cost.

Issued in Washington, DC on August 12, 2003.

Emil Frankel,

Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy.

[FR Doc. 03-20932 Filed 8-14-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-62-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[FMCSA Docket No. FMCSA-2003-15268]

Qualification of Drivers; Exemption Applications; Vision

AGENCY: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of final disposition.

SUMMARY: The FMCSA announces its decision to exempt 35 individuals from the vision requirement in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs). The exemptions will enable these individuals to qualify as drivers of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in interstate commerce without meeting the vision standard prescribed in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10).

DATES: August 15, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by DOT DMS Docket Number FMCSA-2003-15268 by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Follow the instructions for submitting comments on the DOT electronic docket site.

- *Fax:* 1-202-493-2251.

• *Mail:* Docket Management Facility; U.S. Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Nassif Building, Room PL-401, Washington, DC 20590-0001.

• *Hand Delivery:* Room PL-401 on the plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays.

• *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the on-line instructions for submitting comments.

Instructions: All submissions must include the agency name and docket number for this notice. For detailed instructions on submitting comments and additional information on the rulemaking process, see the Public Participation heading of the Supplementary Information section of this document. Note that all comments received will be posted without change to <http://dms.dot.gov>, including any personal information provided. Please see the Privacy Act heading under Regulatory Notices.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments received, go to <http://dms.dot.gov> at any time or to Room PL-401 on the plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Sandra Zywockarte, Office of Bus and Truck Standards and Operations, (202) 366-2987, FMCSA, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., *e.t.*, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Public Participation: The DMS is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. You can get electronic submission and retrieval help guidelines under the "help" section of the DMS Web site. If you want us to notify you that we received your comments, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard or print the acknowledgement page that appears after submitting comments on-line.

Privacy Act: Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, *etc.*). You may review the Department of Transportation's complete Privacy Act Statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477-78) or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Background

On June 23, 2003, the FMCSA published a Notice of its receipt of applications from 36 individuals, and requested comments from the public (68 FR 37197). The 36 individuals petitioned the FMCSA for exemptions from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), which applies to drivers

of CMVs in interstate commerce. They are: Gene E. Adams, Morris R. Beebe, William V. Beekler, Jerry W. Branning, Dennis R. Burda, James A. Busbin, Jr., Domenic J. Carassai, Theodore W. Cozat, Todd L. Dewey, John F. Dougherty, Fred W. Duran, Paul J. Edwards, Sr., William R. Evridge, Kenneth J. Fisk, Leslie W. Good, Michael E. Grens, Rodney P. Hains, Bruce E. Hemmer, Steven P. Holden, Russell R. Inlow, Christopher G. Jarvela, Henry Joiner, Darrell D. Kropf, Brad L. Mathna, William G. McClam, Vincent P. Miller, Warren J. Nyland, Dennis M. Prevas, Terry B. Pritchett, Greg L. Riles, Dwayne L. Sandlin, Jon D. Schwengel, Steven R. Smith, Calvin D. Tomlinson, Mona J. van Krieken, and Paul S. Yocum.

Under 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e), the FMCSA may grant an exemption for a 2-year period if it finds "such exemption would likely achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to, or greater than, the level that would be achieved absent such exemption." The statute also allows the agency to renew exemptions at the end of the 2-year period. Accordingly, the FMCSA has evaluated the 36 applications on their merits and made a determination to grant the exemptions to 35 of them. The comment period closed on July 23, 2003. One comment was received, and its contents were carefully considered by the FMCSA in reaching the final decision to grant the exemptions.

The FMCSA has not made a decision on the application of Dwayne L. Sandlin. Subsequent to the publication of the notice of applications and request for comments, the agency received additional documentation concerning his driving record and is evaluating the information. A decision on this application will be made in the future.

Vision and Driving Experience of the Applicants

The vision requirement in the FMCSRs provides:

A person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle if that person has distant visual acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in each eye without corrective lenses or visual acuity separately corrected to 20/40 (Snellen) or better with corrective lenses, distant binocular acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in both eyes with or without corrective lenses, field of vision of at least 70° in the horizontal meridian in each eye, and the ability to recognize the colors of traffic signals and devices showing standard red, green, and amber (49 CFR 391.41(b)(10)).

Since 1992, the agency has undertaken studies to determine if this

vision standard should be amended. The final report from our medical panel recommends changing the field of vision standard from 70° to 120°, while leaving the visual acuity standard unchanged. (See Frank C. Berson, M.D., Mark C. Kuperwaser, M.D., Lloyd Paul Aiello, M.D., and James W. Rosenberg, M.D., "Visual Requirements and Commercial Drivers," October 16, 1998, filed in the docket, FHWA-98-4334.) The panel's conclusion supported the agency's view that the present standard is reasonable and necessary as a general standard to ensure highway safety. The FMCSA also recognizes that some drivers do not meet the vision standard, but have adapted their driving to accommodate their vision limitation and demonstrated their ability to drive safely.

The 35 applicants fall into this category. They are unable to meet the vision standard in one eye for various reasons, including amblyopia, corneal and macular scars, and loss of an eye due to trauma. In most cases, their eye conditions were not recently developed. All but 14 of the applicants were either born with their vision impairments or have had them since childhood. The 14 individuals who sustained their vision conditions as adults have had them for periods ranging from 4 to 44 years.

Although each applicant has one eye which does not meet the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), each has at least 20/40 corrected vision in the other eye, and in a doctor's opinion has sufficient vision to perform all the tasks necessary to operate a CMV. The doctors' opinions are supported by the applicants' possession of valid commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) or non-CDLs to operate CMVs. Before issuing CDLs, States subject drivers to knowledge and performance tests designed to evaluate their qualifications to operate a CMV. All these applicants satisfied the testing standards for their State of residence. By meeting State licensing requirements, the applicants demonstrated their ability to operate a commercial vehicle, with their limited vision, to the satisfaction of the State.

While possessing a valid CDL or non-CDL, these 35 drivers have been authorized to drive a CMV in intrastate commerce, even though their vision disqualifies them from driving in interstate commerce. They have driven CMVs with their limited vision for careers ranging from 3 to 46 years. In the past 3 years, eight of the drivers have had convictions for traffic violations. Seven of these convictions were for speeding, two for "failure to obey traffic sign," one for "following too closely," and one for "impeding traffic." One

driver was involved in an accident but did not receive a citation.

The qualifications, experience, and medical condition of each applicant were stated and discussed in detail in the June 23, 2003 notice (68 FR 37197). Since there were no docket comments on the specific merits or qualifications of any applicant, we have not repeated the individual profiles here. Our summary analysis of the applicants is supported by the information published at 68 FR 37197.

Basis for Exemption Determination

Under 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e), the FMCSA may grant an exemption from the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) if the exemption is likely to achieve an equivalent or greater level of safety than would be achieved without the exemption. Without the exemption, applicants will continue to be restricted to intrastate driving. With the exemption, applicants can drive in interstate commerce. Thus, our analysis focuses on whether an equal or greater level of safety is likely to be achieved by permitting each of these drivers to drive in interstate commerce as opposed to restricting him or her to driving in intrastate commerce.

To evaluate the effect of these exemptions on safety, the FMCSA considered not only the medical reports about the applicants' vision, but also their driving records and experience with the vision deficiency. To qualify for an exemption from the vision standard, the FMCSA requires a person to present verifiable evidence that he or she has driven a commercial vehicle safely with the vision deficiency for 3 years. Recent driving performance is especially important in evaluating future safety, according to several research studies designed to correlate past and future driving performance. Results of these studies support the principle that the best predictor of future performance by a driver is his/her past record of accidents and traffic violations. Copies of the studies have been added to the docket. (FHWA-98-3637)

We believe we can properly apply the principle to monocular drivers, because data from a former FMCSA waiver study program clearly demonstrates that the driving performance of experienced monocular drivers in the program is better than that of all CMV drivers collectively. (See 61 FR 13338, 13345, March 26, 1996.) The fact that experienced monocular drivers with good driving records in the waiver program demonstrated their ability to drive safely supports a conclusion that other monocular drivers, meeting the

same qualifying conditions as those required by the waiver program, are also likely to have adapted to their vision deficiency and will continue to operate safely.

The first major research correlating past and future performance was done in England by Greenwood and Yule in 1920. Subsequent studies, building on that model, concluded that accident rates for the same individual exposed to certain risks for two different time periods vary only slightly. (See Bates and Neyman, University of California Publications in Statistics, April 1952.) Other studies demonstrated theories of predicting accident proneness from accident history coupled with other factors. These factors—such as age, sex, geographic location, mileage driven and conviction history—are used every day by insurance companies and motor vehicle bureaus to predict the probability of an individual experiencing future accidents. (See Weber, Donald C., "Accident Rate Potential: An Application of Multiple Regression Analysis of a Poisson Process," Journal of American Statistical Association, June 1971.) A 1964 California Driver Record Study prepared by the California Department of Motor Vehicles concluded that the best overall accident predictor for both concurrent and nonconcurrent events is the number of single convictions. This study used 3 consecutive years of data, comparing the experiences of drivers in the first 2 years with their experiences in the final year.

Applying principles from these studies to the past 3-year record of the 35 applicants receiving an exemption, we note that the applicants have had only 1 accident and 11 traffic violations in the last 3 years. The applicants achieved this record of safety while driving with their vision impairment, demonstrating the likelihood that they have adapted their driving skills to accommodate their condition. As the applicants' ample driving histories with their vision deficiencies are good predictors of future performance, the FMCSA concludes their ability to drive safely can be projected into the future.

We believe the applicants' intrastate driving experience and history provide an adequate basis for predicting their ability to drive safely in interstate commerce. Intrastate driving, like interstate operations, involves substantial driving on highways on the interstate system and on other roads built to interstate standards. Moreover, driving in congested urban areas exposes the driver to more pedestrian and vehicular traffic than exists on interstate highways. Faster reaction to traffic and traffic signals is generally

required because distances are more compact than on highways. These conditions tax visual capacity and driver response just as intensely as interstate driving conditions. The veteran drivers in this proceeding have operated CMVs safely under those conditions for at least 3 years, most for much longer. Their experience and driving records lead us to believe that each applicant is capable of operating in interstate commerce as safely as he or she has been performing in intrastate commerce. Consequently, the FMCSA finds that exempting these applicants from the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) is likely to achieve a level of safety equal to that existing without the exemption. For this reason, the agency is granting the exemptions for the 2-year period allowed by 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e) to 35 of the 36 applicants listed in the June notice.

We recognize that the vision of an applicant may change and affect his/her ability to operate a commercial vehicle as safely as in the past. As a condition of the exemption, therefore, the FMCSA will impose requirements on the 35 individuals consistent with the grandfathering provisions applied to drivers who participated in the agency's vision waiver program.

Those requirements are found at 49 CFR 391.64(b) and include the following: (1) That each individual be physically examined every year (a) by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who attests that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), and (b) by a medical examiner who attests that the individual is otherwise physically qualified under 49 CFR 391.41; (2) that each individual provide a copy of the ophthalmologist's or optometrist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination; and (3) that each individual provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the employer for retention in the driver's qualification file, or keep a copy in his/her driver's qualification file if he/she is self-employed. The driver must also have a copy of the certification when driving, for presentation to a duly authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official.

Discussion of Comments

The FMCSA received one comment in this proceeding. The comment was considered and is discussed below.

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) expresses continued opposition to the FMCSA's policy to grant exemptions from the FMCSRs, including the driver qualification standards. Specifically, Advocates: (1)

Objects to the manner in which the FMCSA presents driver information to the public and makes safety determinations; (2) objects to the agency's reliance on conclusions drawn from the vision waiver program; (3) claims the agency has misinterpreted statutory language on the granting of exemptions (49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e)); and finally (4) suggests that a recent Supreme Court decision affects the legal validity of vision exemptions.

The issues raised by Advocates were addressed at length in 64 FR 51568 (September 23, 1999), 64 FR 66962 (November 30, 1999), 64 FR 69586 (December 13, 1999), 65 FR 159 (January 3, 2000), 65 FR 57230 (September 21, 2000), and 66 FR 13825 (March 7, 2001). We will not address these points again here, but refer interested parties to those earlier discussions.

Conclusion

After considering the comments to the docket and based upon its evaluation of the 35 exemption applications, the FMCSA exempts Gene E. Adams, Morris R. Beebe, William V. Beekler, Jerry W. Branning, Dennis R. Burda, James A. Busbin, Jr., Domenic J. Carassai, Theodore W. Cozat, Todd L. Dewey, John F. Dougherty, Fred W. Duran, Paul J. Edwards, Sr., William R. Evridge, Kenneth J. Fisk, Leslie W. Good, Michael E. Grens, Rodney P. Hains, Bruce E. Hemmer, Steven P. Holden, Russell R. Inlow, Christopher G. Jarvela, Henry Joiner, Darrell D. Kropf, Brad L. Mathna, William G. McClam, Vincent P. Miller, Warren J. Nyland, Dennis M. Prevas, Terry B. Pritchett, Greg L. Riles, Jon D. Schwengel, Steven R. Smith, Calvin D. Tomlinson, Mona J. van Krieken, and Paul S. Yocum from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), subject to the following conditions: (1) That each individual be physically examined every year (a) by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who attests that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), and (b) by a medical examiner who attests that the individual is otherwise physically qualified under 49 CFR 391.41; (2) that each individual provide a copy of the ophthalmologist's or optometrist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination; and (3) that each individual provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the employer for retention in the driver's qualification file, or keep a copy in his/her driver's qualification file if he/she is self-employed. The driver must also have a copy of the certification when driving, so it may be presented to a duly

authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official.

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e), each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless revoked earlier by the FMCSA. The exemption will be revoked if: (1) The person fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the exemption; (2) the exemption has resulted in a lower level of safety than was maintained before it was granted; or (3) continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136. If the exemption is still effective at the end of the 2-year period, the person may apply to the FMCSA for a renewal under procedures in effect at that time.

Issued on: August 11, 2003.

Robert F. Proferes,

Acting Associate Administrator for Policy and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 03-20889 Filed 8-14-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-EX-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Docket No. FRA-2000-7257]

Notice No. 31; Railroad Safety Advisory Committee; Notice of Meeting

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of Railroad Safety Advisory Committee ("RSAC") meeting.

SUMMARY: FRA announces the next meeting of the RSAC, a Federal Advisory Committee that develops railroad safety regulations through a consensus process. The RSAC meeting topics will include updates on the Safety Reauthorization Bill, the Illinois Department of Transportation Positive Train Control Project, and the Highway-Rail Crossing Action Plan. Status reports will be given on the Event Recorder, Locomotive Crashworthiness, Passenger Safety and other active working groups. The Committee will be briefed on the International Application of Alcohol and Drug Rules, and Medical Standards for Safety Critical Employees.

DATES: The meeting of the RSAC is scheduled to commence at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. on Thursday, September 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The meeting of the RSAC will be held at the Washington Plaza, 10 Thomas Circle, NW., Washington, DC 20005, (202) 842-1300. The meeting is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Sign and