

Issued on: August 20, 2012.

Larry W. Minor,

Associate Administrator for Policy.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2012-0161]

Qualification of Drivers; Exemption Applications; Vision

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

ACTION: Notice of final disposition.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to exempt 13 individuals from the vision requirement in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs). They are unable to meet the vision requirement in one eye for various reasons. The exemptions will enable these individuals to operate commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in interstate commerce without meeting the prescribed vision requirement in one eye. The Agency has concluded that granting these exemptions will provide a level of safety that is equivalent to or greater than the level of safety maintained without the exemptions for these CMV drivers.

DATES: The exemptions are effective August 29, 2012. The exemptions expire on August 29, 2014.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Elaine M. Papp, Chief, Medical Programs Division, (202)-366-4001, fmcsamedical@dot.gov, FMCSA, Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Room W64-224, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

You may see all the comments online through the Federal Document Management System (FDMS) at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> at any time or Room W12-140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The FDMS is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. If you want

acknowledgement 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 may search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or of the person signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's Privacy Act Statement for the FDMS published in the **Federal Register** on January 17, 2008 (73 FR 3316), or you may visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-785.pdf>.

Background

On July 16, 2012, FMCSA published a notice of receipt of exemption applications from certain individuals, and requested comments from the public (77 FR 41879). That notice listed 13 applicants' case histories. The 13 individuals applied for exemptions from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), for drivers who operate CMVs in interstate commerce.

Under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, 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, FMCSA has evaluated the 13 applications on their merits and made a determination to grant exemptions to each of them.

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 requirement red, green, and amber (49 CFR 391.41(b)(10)).

FMCSA recognizes that some drivers do not meet the vision requirement but have adapted their driving to accommodate their vision limitation and demonstrated their ability to drive

safely. The 13 exemption applicants listed in this notice are in this category. They are unable to meet the vision requirement in one eye for various reasons, including retinal detachment, acute zonal occult outer retinopathy, central scotoma, enucleation, amblyopia, macular scarring, strabismus, loss of vision, and corneal scarring. In most cases, their eye conditions were not recently developed. Five of the applicants were either born with their vision impairments or have had them since childhood.

The eight individuals that sustained their vision conditions as adults have had it for a period of 5 to 28 years.

Although each applicant has one eye which does not meet the vision requirement 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. 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 skills tests designed to evaluate their qualifications to operate a CMV.

All of these applicants satisfied the testing requirements for their State of residence. By meeting State licensing requirements, the applicants demonstrated their ability to operate a CMV, with their limited vision, to the satisfaction of the State.

While possessing a valid CDL or non-CDL, these 13 drivers have been authorized to drive a CMV in intrastate commerce, even though their vision disqualified them from driving in interstate commerce. They have driven CMVs with their limited vision for careers ranging from 3 to 43 years. In the past 3 years, two of the drivers were involved in crashes, and four of the drivers were convicted of moving violations in a CMV.

The qualifications, experience, and medical condition of each applicant were stated and discussed in detail in the July 16, 2012 notice (77 FR 41879).

Basis for Exemption Determination

Under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, FMCSA may grant an exemption from the vision requirement 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, FMCSA considered the medical reports about the applicants' vision as well as their driving records and experience with the vision deficiency.

To qualify for an exemption from the vision requirement, FMCSA requires a person to present verifiable evidence that he/she has driven a commercial vehicle safely with the vision deficiency for the past 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 crashes and traffic violations. Copies of the studies may be found at Docket Number FMCSA-1998-3637.

We believe we can properly apply the principle to monocular drivers, because data from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) former waiver study program clearly demonstrate 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 demonstrated safe driving records in the waiver program 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 crash 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 crash proneness from crash 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 crashes (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 crash 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 13 applicants, two of the drivers were involved in crashes, and four were convicted of moving violations in a CMV. All the applicants achieved a 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, FMCSA concludes their ability to drive safely can be projected into the future.

We believe that 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 between them are more compact. 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/she has been performing in intrastate commerce. Consequently, FMCSA finds that exempting these applicants from the vision requirement 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. 31136(e) and 31315 to the 13 applicants listed in the notice of July 16, 2012 (77 FR 41879).

We recognize that the vision of an applicant may change and affect his/her ability to operate a CMV as safely as in

the past. As a condition of the exemption, therefore, FMCSA will impose requirements on the 13 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 requirement 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 have a copy of the certification when driving, for presentation to a duly authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official.

Discussion of Comments

FMCSA received two comments in this proceeding. The comments were considered and discussed below.

The first individual, Darshan Patel, was in favor of granting the Federal vision exemption to all of the drivers listed in this notice.

The second individual, Khalia Spencer, was cautionary and recommended additional stipulations to ensure that the drivers remain qualified and the program safe.

In response to this comment, FMCSA's exemption process supports drivers with vision deficiencies who seek to operate in interstate commerce. In addition, FMCSA relies on the expert medical opinion of the optometrist or ophthalmologist, who are required to attest that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), and the medical examiner, who is required to attest that the individual is otherwise physically qualified under 49 CFR 391.41. Until the Agency issues a Final Rule, however, drivers with vision deficiencies must continue to apply for exemptions from FMCSA, and request renewals of such exemptions. FMCSA will grant exemptions only to those applicants who meet the specific conditions and comply with all the requirements of the exemption.

Conclusion

Based upon its evaluation of the 13 exemption applications, FMCSA exempts Joseph E. Brunette (CA), William C. Christy (FL), Anthony A. Gibson, Jr. (IL), Rickey W. Goins (TN), Michael J. Hoffarth (WA), Boyd M. Kinzer, Jr. (TN), Jason N. Moore (VA), Dennis M. Rubeck (WY), Leon F. Stephens (CO), Clayton L. Schroeder (MN), James C. Sharp (PA), Ronald J. VanHoof (WA), and Scott C. Westphal (MN) from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), subject to the requirements cited above (49 CFR 391.64(b)).

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless revoked earlier by 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. 31136 and 31315.

If the exemption is still effective at the end of the 2-year period, the person may apply to FMCSA for a renewal under procedures in effect at that time.

Issued on: August 20, 2012.

Larry W. Minor,

Associate Administrator for Policy.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Docket No. FRA-2000-7257 Notice No. 69]

Railroad Safety Advisory Committee; Notice of Meeting

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

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

SUMMARY: FRA announces the forty-seventh meeting of the RSAC, a Federal Advisory Committee that develops railroad safety regulations through a consensus process. The RSAC meeting topics will include opening remarks from the FRA Administrator, and status reports will be provided by the Critical Incident, Fatigue Management, and Risk Reduction Working Groups. Status reports will also be provided by the Engineering and System Safety Task Forces, and a presentation on headwear will be provided. This agenda is subject

to change, including the possible addition of further proposed tasks under the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

DATES: The RSAC meeting is scheduled to commence at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 27, 2012, and will adjourn by 4:30 p.m.

ADDRESSES: The RSAC meeting will be held at the National Housing Center, 1201 15th Street NW., Washington, DC 20005. The meeting is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Sign and oral interpretation can be made available if requested 10 calendar days before the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Larry Woolverton, RSAC Administrative Officer/Coordinator, FRA, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Mailstop 25, Washington, DC 20590, (202) 493-6212; or Mr. Robert Lauby, Deputy Associate Administrator for Regulatory and Legislative Operations, FRA, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Mailstop 25, Washington, DC 20590, (202) 493-6474.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Pursuant to Section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463), FRA is giving notice of a meeting of the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC). The RSAC was established to provide advice and recommendations to FRA on railroad safety matters. The RSAC is composed of 54 voting representatives from 32 member organizations, representing various rail industry perspectives. In addition, there are non-voting advisory representatives from the agencies with railroad safety regulatory responsibility in Canada and Mexico, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the Federal Transit Administration. The diversity of the Committee ensures the requisite range of views and expertise necessary to discharge its responsibilities. See the RSAC Web site for details on prior RSAC activities and pending tasks: <http://rsac.fra.dot.gov/>. Please refer to the notice published in the **Federal Register** on March 11, 1996 (61 FR 9740), for additional information about the RSAC.

Issued in Washington, DC, on August 23, 2012.

Robert C. Lauby,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Regulatory and Legislative Operations.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Petition for Exemption From the Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard; BMW of North America, LLC

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Grant of petition for exemption.

SUMMARY: This document grants in full the BMW of North America, LLC (BMW) petition for exemption of the Carline 4 vehicle line in accordance with 49 CFR Part 543, *Exemption from the Theft Prevention Standard*. This petition is granted because the agency has determined that the antitheft device to be placed on the line as standard equipment is likely to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as compliance with the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard (49 CFR part 541). BMW requested confidential treatment for specific information in its petition that the agency will address by separate letter.

DATES: The exemption granted by this notice is effective beginning with the 2014 model year (MY).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Carlita Ballard, Office of International Policy, Fuel Economy and Consumer Programs, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., West Building, Room W43-439, Washington, DC 20590. Ms. Ballard's telephone number is (202) 366-5222. Her fax number is (202) 493-2990.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a petition dated June 4, 2012, BMW requested an exemption from the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard (49 CFR Part 541) for the Carline 4 vehicle line beginning with MY 2014. The petition requested exemption from parts-marking pursuant to 49 CFR Part 543, *Exemption from Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard*, based on the installation of an antitheft device as standard equipment for an entire vehicle line.

Under § 543.5(a), a manufacturer may petition NHTSA to grant an exemption for one vehicle line per model year. In its petition, BMW provided a detailed description and diagram of the identity, design, and location of the components of the antitheft device for its Carline 4 vehicle line. BMW stated that all Carline 4 vehicles will be equipped with a passive antitheft device as standard equipment beginning with MY 2014.