

approximately once per month, on specific topics. The topics for the first three teleconferences are as follows:

(1) *What Level of Safety Should FAA Target?* We will discuss whether the FAA should regulate to one or multiple levels of space flight safety, what level or levels of safety the FAA should attempt to achieve, and whether the level or levels of safety should be quantified. We will also discuss what level of care, short of a fatality, the FAA should be concerned with.

(2) *What Should FAA Oversight Look Like?* Aircraft-like certification is not feasible at this time, due to current technology and the FAA's statutory mandate only to pursue minimal regulations that take into consideration the evolving standards of safety in the commercial space flight industry. 51 U.S.C. 50905(c)(3). We will discuss what a licensing process should look like in terms of FAA oversight, whether such oversight could or should be called a "certification," and for how long informed consent should remain in effect.

(3) *What Types of Requirements and Associated Guidance Material Should FAA Develop?* In general, the FAA favors space transportation regulations that are performance or process based. We will discuss the level of empirical or analytical data necessary to justify any performance-based human space flight regulation, the possible use of Advisory Circulars to add clarity to regulations, and what place government and industry standards should have in FAA licensing.

Interested members of the public may submit relevant written statements for the COMSTAC working group members to consider under the advisory process. Statements may concern the issues and agenda items mentioned above or additional issues that may be relevant for the U.S. commercial space transportation industry. Interested parties wishing to submit written statements should contact Susan Lender, DFO, (the Contact Person listed below) in writing (mail or email) by August 7, 2012, for the August 14 teleconference, September 11, 2012, for the September 18 teleconference, and October 16, 2012, for the October 23 teleconference. This way the information can be made available to COMSTAC members for their review and consideration before each teleconference. Written statements should be supplied in the following formats: one hard copy with original signature or one electronic copy via email. The FAA may schedule up to 10 more teleconferences in the coming months to allow the U.S. commercial

space transportation industry to share views with the FAA on a number of specific topics related to commercial human space flight safety.

An agenda will be posted on the FAA Web site at <http://www.faa.gov/go/ast>.

Individuals who plan to participate and need special assistance should inform the Contact Person listed below in advance of the meeting.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Susan Lender (AST-5), Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST), 800 Independence Avenue SW., Room 331, Washington, DC 20591, telephone (202) 267-8029; Email susan.lender@faa.gov. Complete information regarding COMSTAC is available on the FAA Web site at: http://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ast/advisory_committee/.

Issued in Washington, DC, July 23, 2012.

George C. Nield,

Associate Administrator for Commercial Space Transportation.

[FR Doc. 2012-18555 Filed 7-27-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2012-0106]

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 12 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 July 30, 2012. The exemptions expire on July 30, 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 June 4, 2012, FMCSA published a notice of receipt of exemption applications from certain individuals, and requested comments from the public (77 FR 33017). That notice listed 12 applicants' case histories. The 12 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 12 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 a 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 12 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 complete loss of vision, corneal scarring, amblyopia, retinal detachment, optic nerve atrophy, presbyopia, enucleation and retinal damage. In most cases, their eye conditions were not recently developed. Nine of the applicants were either born with their vision impairments or have had them since childhood. The individuals that sustained their vision conditions as adults have had it for a period of 25 to 39 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 12 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 5 to 38 years. In the past 3 years, two of the drivers were involved in crashes, and one was convicted of a moving violation in a CMV.

The qualifications, experience, and medical condition of each applicant were stated and discussed in detail in the June 4, 2012 notice (77 FR 33017).

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 12 applicants, two of the drivers were involved in crashes, and one was convicted of a moving violation 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 12 applicants listed in the notice of June 4, 2012 (77 FR 33017).

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 12 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 no comments in this proceeding.

Conclusion

Based upon its evaluation of the 12 exemption applications, FMCSA exempts Robert F. Bennett (NJ), Dale W. Coblentz (MT), Michael L. Dean (MI), Damon G. Gallardo (CA), Marc D. Groszkruenger (IA), Daniel L. Grover (KS), James E. Modaffari (OR), Gerardus

C. Molenaar (PA), James J. Narkewich (MA), Philip N. Polcastro (NY), Gregory A. Reinert (MN) and Scott J. Schlenker (WA) 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: July 18, 2012.

Larry W. Minor,

Associate Administrator for Policy.

[FR Doc. 2012-18567 Filed 7-27-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

Information Collection Activities (Depreciation Studies)

ACTION: 60-day notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: As part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork burdens, and as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, 44 U.S.C. 3501-3519 (PRA), the Surface Transportation Board (Board) gives notice of its intent to request from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) the information collection—Rail Depreciation Studies—further described below.

Comments are requested concerning (1) whether this collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Board, including whether the collection has practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the Board's burden estimates; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on the respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology, when appropriate. Submitted comments will be included and/or summarized in the Board's request for OMB approval.

DATES: Written comments are due on September 28, 2012.

ADDRESSES: Direct all comments to Marilyn Levitt, Surface Transportation Board, Suite 1260, 395 E Street SW., Washington, DC 20423-0001, or to levittm@stb.dot.gov. Comments should be identified as "Paperwork Reduction Act Comments," and should refer to the title of the collection commented upon.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For additional information or copies of the information collection(s) contact Paul Aguiar at (202) 245-0323 or aguarp@stb.dot.gov. [Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) for the hearing impaired: (800) 877-8339.]

Subjects: In this notice the Board is requesting comments on the following information collection:

Title: Rail Depreciation Studies.

OMB Control Number: 2140-XXXX.

Form Number: None.

Type of Review: Collection in existence without a Control Number.

Respondents: Class I railroads.

Number of Respondents: 7.

Estimated Time per Response:

Between 500 and 540 hours annually, depending on whether the rail-carrier respondent has significant assistance from outside consultants, resulting in an average of 515 hours per response.

Frequency of Response: Every 3 years for equipment; every 6 years for other depreciable property.

Total Annual Hour Burden: 3,605 hours (515 hours × 7 Class I railroads).

Total Annual "Non-Hour Burden"

Cost: Between \$8,340 and \$30,000 annually, depending on whether the rail-carrier respondent has significant assistance from outside consultants, resulting in an annual average of \$20,500 and a cumulative total for all 7 Class I railroads of \$143,500.

Needs and Uses: Under 49 U.S.C. 11145, the Board is required to identify those classes of property for which rail carriers may include depreciation charges under operating expenses and the Board must also prescribe a rate of depreciation that may be charged to those classes of property. Pursuant to the Board's authority under § 11145, Class I (large) rail carriers are required to submit to the Board Depreciation Studies. Information in these studies is not available from any other source. The Board uses the information in these studies to prescribe depreciation rates. These depreciation rate prescriptions state the period for which the depreciation rates therein are applicable. Class I railroads apply the prescribed depreciation rates to their investment base to determine monthly and annual depreciation expense. This expense is included in the railroads' operating expenses, which are reported