

**National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners  
Public Listening Session  
St. Louis, Missouri  
July 26, 2006  
Meeting Summary**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Larry W. Minor**  
**Director, Office of Bus and Truck Standards and Operations**  
**Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

Mr. Minor thanked everyone for attending, introduced himself, and noted that his office has responsibility for developing FMCSA's medical programs, which includes establishing the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (NRCME) and leading the medical standards review and development process. Mr. Minor emphasized that the meeting is called a Public Listening Session because FMCSA wants to hear what the public has to say about its programs and initiatives.

**Administrative Remarks:**

- Sign language interpreters were introduced.
- Emergency information and amenities were outlined.

**Introductory Remarks:**

Mr. Minor gave a brief outline of the morning's events and the two initiatives that would be discussed: the Medical Review Board (MRB) and medical standards review and development process, and an update on the establishment of the NRCME program. He also mentioned that there will be a Public Listening Session in conjunction with the first MRB meeting in Washington, DC on August 31, 2006.

**Key Points:**

- The mission, structure, and background of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) were described for audience members who were not familiar with the Agency.
- FMCSA is proactively seeking ways of reaching the goal of reducing commercial motor vehicle (CMV) deaths by 41% between 1996 and 2008. The Agency recognizes the toll large truck and bus fatalities and injuries have on victims and their families as well as the burden on taxpayers.
- The work of FMCSA is guided by reliable data, science, and other evidence toward the areas of greatest safety gains, which has led the Agency to focus more attention on the

driver; the driver being the major contributor to the preponderance of CMV crashes. This is also true in crashes involving passenger cars. The area of medical qualifications and the physical condition of the Nation's truck and bus drivers is the cornerstone to improved safety.

- FMCSA relies on the medical community to perform physical examinations on drivers, and it is important for them to understand the demands that driving a bus or a truck has on those drivers.
- It is critical to the FMCSA mission that all stakeholders recognize the importance of driver physical fitness and understand the occupational demands that are placed on those drivers in the course of their daily business.
- The MRB initiative establishes a nationally recognized standing board of medical experts to provide scientific advice to FMCSA on ongoing medical issues. This includes identification of appropriate physical qualifications of CMV drivers, medical standards and guidelines, and educational curriculum for training medical examiners who certify the drivers that meet the physical qualification standards.
- The MRB will initially be charged with review of all current FMCSA medical standards, as well as proposing new science-based standards and guidelines to ensure that drivers operating CMVs in interstate commerce are physically capable of doing so.
- The meeting format consisted of presentations from two speakers followed by a question and answer period. The reasoning behind the meeting format was to provide attendees the full context of FMCSA's preliminary thinking about the Registry, cover the major topic areas, and then hear viewpoints, reactions or suggestions from the attendees.

## **Speakers**

**Linda Phillips**

**National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners Initiative  
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

## **Introductory Remarks:**

Ms. Phillips provided an update on the FMCSA Medical Program focusing specifically on the MRB and the medical standards review and development process. She also gave examples of the types of activities the Physical Qualifications Division engages in on a daily basis.

## **Key Points:**

- The vision exemption program has received nearly 5,000 applications since 1998, and since August 2005, the Agency has responded to more than 3,000 requests for diabetes exemptions.

- There are 13 medical standards directly related to driving.
  - Nine of these standards allow for medical examiner discretion in determining if a medical condition affects the ability to drive safely.
  - Four medical standards are absolute and prohibit driving; use of insulin, presence of epilepsy (seizure disorder), and specific parameters for vision and hearing.
- There are two Federal exemption programs—one for vision and one for diabetes. These programs provide a mechanism that allows drivers who do not meet the medical standards to drive if they are otherwise medically qualified. These programs provide drivers, who would not be able to drive, an opportunity to be a CMV driver.
- The Skill Performance Evaluation (SPE) program has evolved over several decades and is primarily administered in the field on a case-by-case basis. It pertains to people who have limb impairments or amputations. They must meet specific criteria to qualify for the SPE program, but this program does expand opportunities for impaired individuals.
- The FMCSA medical program has the challenge of balancing safety with assuring that standards and guidelines for CMV drivers are fair and reasonable. FMCSA is committed to ensuring the medical standards are up-to-date.
- The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) provides the authority that strengthens the Agency's ability to control and monitor the medical examination process. The Agency began planning for medical initiatives in FY 2004 and requested expanded authorities. Those requests were ratified by Congress when SAFETEA-LU was signed in August, 2005.
- In 2005, FMCSA began several major initiatives to improve the medical certification of CMV drivers. The MRB, the medical standards review and development process, and the NRCME program are included in those initiatives.
- The mission of the MRB is to improve highway safety by providing expert advice to FMCSA on medical standards, guidelines, and research on the medical certification of CMV drivers.
- The first meeting of the MRB is scheduled for August 31, 2006 in Washington, DC. This meeting was announced in a Federal Register notice published on June 26, 2006, which provides details about how the public can participate in the process. Research panels will be convened to support the MRB process. Under the guidance of the MRB, the panels will provide the scientific advice and evidence necessary to modify existing medical standards or add new ones.

**Glenna Tinney**  
**National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners**  
**Axiom Resource Management, Inc.**

**Introductory Remarks:**

Ms. Tinney gave a brief history of the National Registry. She also discussed the goal, objectives, methods and critical components of the National Registry.

**Key Points:**

- There are approximately 4-5 million drivers subject to Federal medical standards and over 685,000 bus and truck companies.
- Approximately 2-3 million certification examinations for interstate drivers are performed annually with examinations required at least biennially.
- Stakeholders for the National Registry program include medical examiners, CMV drivers, motor carriers, safety groups, the general public, Federal, State and local transportation agencies, media, labor unions and insurance organizations.
- Issues related to the CMV driver physical examination process:
  - Lack of consistency in performance of the CMV driver physical examinations
  - Driver impact including time and scheduling and knowledge of the FMCSA medical standards
  - Medical examiner impact including knowledge gaps and outdated guidance
- Currently, there are no training requirements for medical examiners. SAFETEA-LU requires medical examiners to complete required training before being listed on the National Registry.
- The current thinking for the National Registry is for FMCSA to develop the core curriculum specifications and guidelines for medical examiner training and provide these to private-sector accredited continuing education training programs to develop and deliver.
- Certification is one component of the National Registry program. Certification of medical examiners is a measurable process whereby FMCSA can define “qualified medical examiners” using a measurable standard that can be equally applied to all medical examiners. Certification provides a uniform means of establishing competency based on standards.
- The purpose of the certification test is to document that the medical examiner can apply the training appropriately in the CMV driver physical examination setting. Medical

examiners who pass the certification test would receive an FMCSA Certified Medical Examiner credential.

- The FMCSA Medical Examiner Certification Program is being developed in accordance with quality standards for accreditation from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). The accreditation process is equivalent to a voluntary peer review that would determine if the program meets the best practices of the certification industry.
- There is precedent for requiring NCCA accreditation in Department of Transportation (DOT) programs. The DOT Procedures for the Transportation Workplace Drug and Alcohol Testing Program requires the credentialing organizations for DOT Substance Abuse Professionals to be accredited by NCCA.
- The National Registry Web site currently provides general information about the program, development of the training and certification program for medical examiners, information regarding public meetings and conferences, and other news of interest to stakeholders.
- The Web site would ultimately include a searchable database of FMCSA Certified Medical Examiners and would be a one-stop portal to the FMCSA medical examiner certification process that would disseminate information on new medical discoveries, medical policy and requirement changes, and news relevant to certified medical examiners, CMV drivers, motor carrier and bus companies. Ultimately, only medical certificates issued by medical examiners listed on the National Registry will be accepted.
- A Role Delineation Study (job task analysis) on the role of the medical examiner is currently being conducted. It is a critical component in developing a standardized training curriculum and a valid, reliable, and fair certification test. The results of the Role Delineation Study provide the framework for developing both the medical examiner core training curriculum and the certification test.
- The Role Delineation Study will include a population-based survey of approximately 5,000 medical examiners that will validate the medical examiner task statements. Volunteers are being recruited to participate in the survey. Medical examiners who currently perform CMV driver physical examinations can volunteer by visiting the NRCME Web site ([http://67.98.119.114/survey\\_request.aspx](http://67.98.119.114/survey_request.aspx)) or by sending an email to the [contactnrcme@dot.gov](mailto:contactnrcme@dot.gov) address.
- There is sometimes a difference between the medical examiner's perception of the CMV driver's work environment and the reality. This is an area where there is a gap in knowledge for many medical examiners. Medical examiners not only need to know the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), but also how to apply them to the CMV driver in his/her work environment.
- The FMCSA core curriculum for medical examiner training will include training domains on the medical standards and the driver work environment. Questions regarding both the

FMCSRs and application to the driver and work environment will be included on the certification test.

**Dr. Mary D. Gunnels**  
**Chief, Physical Qualifications Division**  
**Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

Dr. Gunnels moderated the question and answer session.

Dr. Gunnels announced that the presentations from the meeting and a meeting summary would be posted on the NRCME Web site (<http://www.nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov>) and that a transcript of the meeting can be requested by sending an email to [contactnrcme@dot.gov](mailto:contactnrcme@dot.gov).

**The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.**