

**Remarks of  
Rose McMurray, Associate Administrator for Policy and Program Development  
FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION  
to the  
NATIONAL REGISTRY OF CERTIFIED MEDICAL EXAMINERS  
PUBLIC MEETING  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA  
JUNE 22, 2005**

**Opening Remarks**

I want to thank you for being here to learn more about our thinking with respect to the Registry and to offer you views about it. My name is Rose McMurray. My office has the lead responsibility for establishing the proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners.

**Administrative Highlights**

One of my roles this morning is to begin with some administrative details to guide this morning's events. There are exits here in the front of the room as well as two in the back. I feel that it's important you are aware of the location of the exits in the event there is an emergency.

Please know that we have folks in the back of the room who are recording the proceedings today. We will tell you at the end of the day how to access that information. We want to make sure that you have access to all the presentations as well as any comments or observations offered. It is important as we conduct these public meetings that we provide information in a format that's useful to the public and provides an opportunity for you to influence the way we are thinking about these initiatives. So, we ask you to fill out a very brief evaluation form that you will find in your packet. Please place your evaluation form in the basket in the foyer outside of this room.

Our plan this morning is to have presentations and then open the floor at the end of the day to hear your views. The reason we want to do this is to provide you the full context of our preliminary thinking about the Registry and hopefully get through the major topical areas. Then, we would like to hear your viewpoints about what we have said, what we are thinking, your reactions and any suggestions that you may have.

We have two sign language interpreters who will be performing sign language interpretation of our discussion. Jennifer Greene and Kelly Turner, we appreciate you being here. Finally, I would like to thank my staff, who has worked very hard to put this public meeting together. They toil everyday in the vineyards of the Physical Qualifications Division of FMCSA, and they have worked very hard, along with our contractors who are assisting us in putting this program together, as well as advising us regarding the course of our medical qualifications program.

**Overview of FMCSA**

Let's begin with a brief discussion about why we are here today and what we plan to do over the morning's course of events. As I said, we are interested to hear from you. We think this is an ideal time for us to provide you with our early thinking about the National Registry of Certified

Medical Examiners. We need to consider the form, the content and the structure of what this Registry might look like. While we have some preliminary thoughts, we didn't want to get too far down the road before we hear from you and hear your insights about how it might work.

Since many of you may not be familiar with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, let me mention very briefly who we are and what we do. We are principally a safety regulatory agency and are part of United States Department of Transportation (DOT). We have over 1,000 employees, most of whom are located throughout our field installations. The Agency also employs a number of contractors who assist in carrying out our responsibilities.

Our basic mission is to promote commercial motor vehicle (CMV) safety by setting standards for truck and bus companies, for vehicles, and for truck and bus drivers. We determine the level of safety compliance necessary by conducting safety assessments, safety reviews, audits, and by working with the States. We also conduct roadside inspections of vehicles and drivers throughout the fifty States and territories. We are held accountable by Congress for showing results and for using our budget authority in the most economical and efficient way. We have very ambitious fatality reduction targets that we are guided by. We have a goal of reducing commercial motor vehicle deaths by 41% between 1996 and 2008. This is a very, very difficult and ambitious goal to achieve, but we are making progress. We are reducing the rate of CMV involved fatalities, but our work isn't getting any easier.

In 2003, there were over 122,000 injuries resulting from crashes involving commercial motor vehicles, and of the over 41,000 deaths on the highways and roadways in the year 2003, around 5,000, or 12%, were CMV-involved fatalities. Naturally, we are motivated to find solutions, and we are proactively seeking ways to drive those numbers down. We do this because it is important for us to have a safety focus, and it is important that we recognize the toll that fatalities and injuries have on victims and their families and the enormous economic burden for us as taxpayers. So, for all of us in DOT, looking for ways to reduce the toll of roadway fatalities and injuries is an important priority.

As we do our work, we are guided by reliable data, science and other evidence. It has become clear we need to focus more attention on the driver; the driver being the major contributor to the preponderance of commercial motor vehicle crashes, as well as other crashes. We see this is where our largest safety gains will be made. One of the cornerstones of looking at driver fitness is the area of medical qualifications and the physical condition of the Nation's truck and bus drivers.

We rely on the medical community to perform physical exams on drivers, and it is important they understand the demands that driving a bus or a truck has on those drivers. Not only do they spend hours on the road operating the vehicle, but they also load and unload cargo and have many other duties they perform during the day. It is critical to our mission that we recognize the importance of driver physical fitness and understand the occupational demands that are placed on those drivers in their daily course of business.

### **National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners**

The National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners initiative is important because it is vital that CMV drivers are healthy and fit. We need to know that the medical standards that are developed for them are applied evenly and uniformly by the community of medical examiners who are conducting their exams. We respect very much the medical training of those of you who

perform these physical exams, but it is important as well to make sure that all medical examiners are qualified and familiar with the occupational demands of commercial drivers and with our regulatory requirements. I think we all agree that driving a Greyhound bus or another motorcoach, or an 18-wheel tractor-trailer isn't the same as driving a four wheel passenger car. We need to recognize this difference as we establish medical standards. Obviously, the potential consequence of a crash involving a commercial motor vehicle is much greater than one involving passenger cars.

## **Overview of Meeting Schedule**

So, what do we plan for today? We have a very ambitious schedule. We are going to get through this fairly quickly so we can open the floor to hear your viewpoints. First, this morning we are going to hear from the head of our Agency, Annette Sandberg. She will begin by providing some opening remarks about our medical program in general and the National Registry in more specific terms, recognizing that we are still in the early throes of developing the program.

She will be followed by Dr. Ellison Wittels, the Senior Medical Consultant to our Agency. He will discuss medical considerations and concerns and how they relate to the Registry and the driver physical exam.

Pat Brown, who has been advising us on the potential functions of the National Registry, will provide the history, overview and current thoughts regarding the Registry.

We are then honored to welcome the Federal Air Surgeon, Dr. Jon Jordan, from our sister Agency, the Federal Aviation Administration. He will talk a little bit about the way the FAA certifies airmen for fitness for duty and lessons learned from that program and how they may apply as we establish the National Registry.

Our final two speakers are Kaye Kirby, from the Physical Qualifications Division, who will talk about what our early thinking is about the Registry and the implications of the Registry to drivers and companies. Wade Delk, who is Executive Director for the National Organization for Competency Assurance, will discuss the importance of the certification and accreditation process. Maggi Gunnels, who is the Chief of our Physical Qualifications Division, will moderate those last two speakers.

Larry Minor, Director, Office of Bus and Truck Standards and Operations, will then moderate the questions and answers session and take questions from the floor. He will solicit your viewpoints and hopefully keep us on track to conclude in the early afternoon.

## **Closing Remarks**

As I close, I would just like to remind you that this isn't the last "bite at the apple" in providing information to you and for you to provide your perspective regarding the course of the National Registry. We will be having meetings in other parts of the country over the next year. So, you will have other opportunities to solicit your friends and colleagues to come and hear about this Registry and to provide comments. Once again, thank you for being here. It's now my pleasure to introduce our boss, who has made very clear her commitment to making our medical qualifications unit stronger and for us to generally upgrade the way we do business in the medical arena. Ms. Annette Sandberg...