

54519, 67 FR 67234, 64 FR 54948, 65 FR 159, 65 FR 20245, 65 FR 57230, 67 FR 57266, 65 FR 33406, 65 FR 57234, 67 FR 46016, 67 FR 57267). Each of these 16 applicants has requested timely renewal of the exemption and has submitted evidence showing that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard specified at 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) and that the vision impairment is stable. In addition, a review of each record of safety while driving with the respective vision deficiencies over the past two years indicates each applicant continues to meet the vision exemption standards. These factors provide an adequate basis for predicting each driver's ability to continue to drive safely in interstate commerce. Therefore, the FMCSA concludes that extending the exemption for each renewal applicant for a period of two years is likely to achieve a level of safety equal to that existing without the exemption.

Comments

The FMCSA will review comments received at any time concerning a particular driver's safety record and determine if the continuation of the exemption is consistent with the requirements at 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e). However, the FMCSA requests that interested parties with specific data concerning the safety records of these drivers submit comments by November 26, 2004.

In the past the FMCSA has received comments from Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) expressing continued opposition to the FMCSA's procedures for renewing exemptions from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10). Specifically, Advocates objects to the agency's extension of the exemptions without any opportunity for public comment prior to the decision to renew, and reliance on a summary statement of evidence to make its decision to extend the exemption of each driver.

The issues raised by Advocates were addressed at length in 69 FR 51346 (August 18, 2004). The FMCSA continues to find its exemption process appropriate to the statutory and regulatory requirements.

Issued on: October 20, 2004.

Rose A. McMurray,

Associate Administrator, Policy and Program Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[FMCSA Docket No. FMCSA-2004-18885]

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 29 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: October 27, 2004.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Maggi Gunnels, 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 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

You may see all the comments online through the Document Management System (DMS) at: <http://dmses.dot.gov>.

Background

On September 1, the FMCSA published a notice of receipt of exemption applications from 29 individuals, and requested comments from the public (69 FR 53493). The 29 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: Paul G. Albrecht, David W. Brown, David J. Caldwell, Walden V. Clarke, Donald O. Clopton, Awilda S. Colon, Richard B. Eckert, Charles B. Edwards, Zane G. Harvey, Jr., Robert T. Hill, Dale E. Johnson, Jimmy D. Johnson II, Jeffrey M. Keyser, Donnie A. Kildow, Carl M. McIntire, John C. McLaughlin, Daniel A. McNabb, David G. Meyers, Thomas L. Oglesby, Michael J. Paul, Russell A. Payne, Rodney M. Pegg, Raymond E. Peterson, Zbigniew P. Pietranik, Dennis E. Pinkston, John C. Rodriguez, Robert B. Schmidt, Wesley L. Schoonover, and Charles E. Wood.

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 29 applications on their merits and made a determination to grant exemptions to all of them. The comment period closed on October 1, 2004. Two comments were received.

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, FMCSA-98-4334.) The panel's conclusion supports the agency's view that the present visual acuity 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 29 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 nine of the applicants were either born with their vision impairments or have had them since childhood. The nine 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 29 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 4 to 37 years. In the past 3 years, three of the drivers have had convictions for traffic violations. Four of these convictions were for speeding and one was for "failure to obey traffic sign." Two drivers were involved in a crash but did not receive a citation.

The qualifications, experience, and medical condition of each applicant were stated and discussed in detail in the September 1, 2004, notice (69 FR 53493). Since there were no substantial docket comments on the specific merits or qualifications of any applicant, we have not repeated the individual profiles here, but note that information presented at 69 FR 53496 indicating that applicant 19, Thomas L. Oglesby, reported he has driven straight trucks for 30 years, accumulating 2.4 million miles, is in error. The information should have indicated that Mr. Oglesby reported he has driven tractor-trailer combinations for 30 years, accumulating 2.4 million miles. Our summary analysis of the applicants is supported by this correction and the information published on September 1, 2004 (69 FR 53493).

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 crashes and traffic violations. Copies of the studies may be found at docket number FMCSA-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 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 29 applicants receiving an exemption, we note that the applicants have had only two crashes and five 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 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 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 the 29 applicants listed in the notice of September 1, 2004 (69 FR 53493).

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 29 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 two comments in this proceeding. The comments were considered and are discussed below.

Mr. William Whitaker did not comment on the receipt of applications for exemption, but requested information about applying for an exemption for himself. FMCSA is responding to him separately by letter.

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 1999 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

Based upon its evaluation of the 29 exemption applications, the FMCSA exempts Paul G. Albrecht, David W. Brown, David J. Caldwell, Walden V. Clarke, Donald O. Clopton, Awilda S. Colon, Richard B. Eckert, Charles B. Edwards, Zane G. Harvey, Jr., Robert T. Hill, Dale E. Johnson, Jimmy D. Johnson II, Jeffrey M. Keyser, Donnie A. Kildow, Carl M. McIntire, John C. McLaughlin, Daniel A. McNabb, David G. Meyers, Thomas L. Oglesby, Michael J. Paul, Russell A. Payne, Rodney M. Pegg, Raymond E. Peterson, Zbigniew P. Pietranik, Dennis E. Pinkston, John C. Rodriguez, Robert B. Schmidt, Wesley L. Schoonover, and Charles E. Wood 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. 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: October 21, 2004.

Rose A. McMurray,

Associate Administrator, Policy and Program Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Petition for Waiver of Compliance

In accordance with part 211 of Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), notice is hereby given that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) received a request for a waiver of compliance with certain requirements of its safety standards. The individual petition is described below, including the party

seeking relief, the regulatory provisions involved, the nature of the relief being requested, and the petitioner's arguments in favor of relief.

Long Island Rail Road (Waiver Petition Docket Number FRA-2004-18854)

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) seeks a waiver of compliance from certain provisions of the *Railroad Locomotive Safety Standards*, 49 CFR part 229. Specifically, LIRR requests relief from the requirements of 49 CFR 229.27(a)(2) *Annual Tests* and 49 CFR 229.29(a) *Biennial Tests*, applicable to a control group of five EMD DE/DM30-AC locomotives equipped with Computer Controlled Brake I (CCB I) type brake equipment furnished by New York Air Brake Corporation (NYAB) of Watertown, New York.

The five locomotives designated for the control group will be Model EMD DE/DM30-AC, built by General Motor's Electro Motive Division (EMD), accepted new by LIRR in 1999, and equipped with NYAB's CCB I brake equipment. The LIRR currently operates a fleet of forty six (46) of this model type(s) and configured locomotives. The current CCB I periodic brake equipment maintenance intervals are 1840 days (five years) in accordance with the FRA Docket Number 2000-7367.

In October 2003, CCB I, from a randomly selected locomotive at the end of a five-year COT&S interval, was removed and sent to New York Air Brake for tests and a tear-down inspection. A test report of this equipment was submitted to the FRA from NYAB to comply with Section 5.1.6 of ABT-3164 as related to the CCB I product five year COT&S 2000-7367 waiver. In summary of that report, New York Air Brake noted that the LIRR's CCB I air brake equipment was fully serviceable at five years of age.

As a result of the NYAB report, the LIRR is seeking relief on the 1840 day (5 year) COT&S on five locomotive described as the "control group of locomotives". The control group of locomotives will be utilized as a test to determine CCB I brake condition when the maintenance cycle is extended past five-year maintenance interval.

The control group of five locomotives will all have their COT&S extended past the 1840 (5 year) COT&S with the following proposed schedule: one locomotive to 2208 days (6 years), two locomotives to 2576 days (7 years), and the two remaining locomotives to 2944 days (8 years). During the testing period for the control group, the remaining locomotives in the LIRR fleet will continue regularly scheduled periodic