

basis. NASD sends frequent reminders to arbitrators about the importance of this obligation, especially after they are notified regarding possible service as an arbitrator. NASD requires arbitrators in each case to affirm that they have reviewed their disclosure report and that it is accurate, and to complete a disclosure checklist attached to the oath. NASD provides each arbitrator on a panel with the co-panelists' biographical profiles in order to facilitate peer reviews for accuracy.⁴

In addition to gathering the above information, NASD currently checks records on the Central Registration Depository (CRD) for arbitrator applicants who have been registered with NASD, most of whom would be categorized as "non-public" arbitrators under NASD Rule 10308(a)(4). NASD currently does not verify any of the information provided by arbitrator applicants who do not have CRD records, most of whom would be classified as "public" arbitrators under NASD Rule 10308(a)(5).

NASD proposes to expand its verification of background information to cover all arbitrator applicants. NASD believes this will provide additional protection to parties using the Dispute Resolution forum, raise the standards of the neutral roster, and enhance investor confidence in the integrity of the forum.⁵

Specifically, NASD Dispute Resolution has identified a vendor to provide the following verification services:

- Criminal check in the county of the applicant's residence;
- Federal criminal check;
- Employment verification; and
- Professional license verification.

The verification fee will be \$80.00 per application. This fee will cover the vendor's expected charge for verification of each application, with the understanding that the actual work required to verify each application will vary. For example, some applicants will have only one employer over the past ten years, and some will have two or more. NASD believes that having a single, reasonable fee for background verification will be more practical administratively than charging different fees that vary depending on each applicant's background.⁶ For this

amount, the vendor will perform county and federal criminal record checks; verify any professional licenses; and check the last employer or, if the applicant has been employed for fewer than ten years by the same employer, then the last two employers. To keep the fee reasonable, NASD will assume that verification of professional licenses provides an indirect check on the applicant's education, since licensing authorities generally verify an applicant's educational history. If the applicant does not have a professional license, however, then the vendor will substitute verification of the last degree awarded.

The background verification fee will be charged for new arbitrator applications that are received by NASD after the effective date of the proposed rule change. It will not apply to arbitrators currently on NASD's arbitrator roster who wish to update information they supplied previously. Applications received after the effective date will not be processed until NASD receives the proper fee.

NASD Dispute Resolution represents that the effective date of this proposal will be October 1, 2003.⁷

The Commission finds that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions of section 15A(b) of the Act,⁸ in general, and furthers the objectives of section 15A(b)(6),⁹ in particular, which requires, among other things, that NASD's rules must be designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, and, in general, to protect investors and the public interest. The Commission believes that verifying background information and credentials for arbitrator applicants will protect investors and the general public and enhance the integrity of the arbitration process.

It is therefore ordered, pursuant to section 19(b)(2) of the Act,¹⁰ that the proposed rule change (SR-NASD-2003-122) is approved.

For the Commission, by the Division of Market Regulation, pursuant to delegated authority.¹¹

Margaret H. McFarland,

Deputy Secretary.

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⁷ *Id.*

⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)

⁹ 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)(6).

¹⁰ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

¹¹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 4500]

30-Day Notice of Proposed Information Collection: Form DS-1648, Application for A, G, or NATO Visa; OMB Control Number 1405-0100

AGENCY: Department of State.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of State has submitted the following information collection request to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for approval in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. Comments should be submitted to OMB within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

The following summarizes the information collection proposal submitted to OMB:

Type of Request: Revision of Currently Approved Collection.

Originating Office: Bureau of Consular Affairs, Department of State (CA/VO).

Title of Information Collection: Application for A, G, or NATO Visa.

Frequency: On occasion.

Form Number: DS-1648.

Respondents: Aliens applying for A, G or NATO visas.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 20,000 per year.

Average Hours Per Response: 30 minutes.

Total Estimated Burden: 10,000 hours per year.

Public comments are being solicited to permit the agency to:

- Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility.
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used.

- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected.

- Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of technology.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Copies of the proposed information collection and supporting documents may be obtained from Brendan Mullarkey of the Office of Visa Services, U.S. Department of State, 2401 E St. NW, RM L-703, Washington, DC 20520, who may be reached on 202-663-1166. Public comments and questions should be directed to the State Department

⁴ For additional information on procedures designed to reveal potential conflicts of interest, see Professor Michael A. Perino, *Report to the SEC Regarding Arbitrator Conflict Disclosure Requirements in NASD and NYSE Securities Arbitrations* (Nov. 12, 2002), available on the Commission's Web site, Market Regulation page, at <http://www.sec.gov/pdf/arbconflict.pdf>.

⁵ See Notice of Proposal, *supra* note 3.

⁶ *Id.*

Desk Officer, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Washington, DC 20530, who may be reached on 202-395-3897.

Dated: September 10, 2003.

Catherine Barry,

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Visa Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 03-24896 Filed 9-30-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 4483]

Shipping Coordinating Committee; Notice of Meeting

The Shipping Coordinating Committee (SHC), through the Working Group on Radio Communications and Search and Rescue of the Subcommittee on Safety of Life at Sea, will conduct open meetings at 9 a.m. on Thursday, October 9, November 6, December 11, and January 29, 2004. The meetings will be held at the Department of Transportation Headquarters Building, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20950. Call the point of contact below for room numbers. The purpose of the meeting is to prepare for the Eighth Session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Subcommittee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR), which is scheduled for the week of February 16-20, 2004, at IMO headquarters in London, England.

The primary matters to be considered are:

- Maritime Safety Information for GMDSS
- Development of a procedure for recognition of mobile satellite systems
- Revision of performance standards for NAVTEX equipment
- Emergency radiocommunications, including false alerts and interference
- Large passenger ship safety
- Issues related to maritime security
- Developments in maritime radiocommunication systems and technology, including long-range tracking
- Matters concerning Search & Rescue
- Planning for the 8th session of COMSAR

Members of the public may attend these meetings up to the seating capacity of the rooms. Interested persons may seek information, including meeting room numbers, by writing; Mr. Russell S. Levin, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, Commandant (G-SCT-2), Room 6509, 2100 Second

Street, SW., Washington, DC 20593-0001, by calling: (202) 267-1389, or by sending Internet electronic mail to rlevin@comdt.uscg.mil and viewing <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/imo/meetings.htm>.

Dated: September 24, 2003.

Steven D. Poulin,

Executive Secretary, Shipping Coordinating Committee, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 03-25016 Filed 9-30-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-15025]

Notice of Request for Clearance of a New Information Collection: Truck Driver Fatigue Management Survey

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

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The FMCSA announces that the Information Collection Request (ICR) described in this notice is being sent to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and approval pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. On May 30, 2003, the FMCSA published a "Notice of Request for Clearance of a New Information Collection: Truck Driver Fatigue Management Survey" in the **Federal Register**. Comments on the proposed information collection burden were solicited. No comments regarding the ICR were received.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before October 31, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, 725 Seventeenth Street, NW., Washington, DC 20503, *Attention:* DOT Desk Officer. We particularly request your comments on whether the collection of information is necessary for the FMCSA to meet its goals of reducing truck crashes, including whether the information is useful to this goal; the accuracy of the estimate of the burden of the information collection; ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information collected; and ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms on information technology.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Robert Carroll, Transportation Specialist, (202) 385-2388, Research

Division, Office of Research and Technology, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, 600 Virginia Avenue, SW., Suite 600, Washington, DC 20024. Office hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Truck Driver Fatigue Management Survey.

Background: The Conference Report on the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2002 (Pub. L. 107-87, 115 Stat. 833, December 18, 2001) noted that the conferees included \$400,000 to study fatigue management techniques, as outlined in the Senate report (H.R. Rep. No. 107-308, at 94 (2001)). The Senate Report on the FY 2002 DOT Appropriations Act directed FMCSA to perform a "study to determine the fatigue management techniques used by truck drivers during overnight operations with an organization representing unionized motor carriers in cooperation with their labor organization" (S. Rep. 107-38, at 83-84 (2001)).

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), on FMCSA's behalf, published a Pre-solicitation Notice on July 1, 2002, on the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Business Opportunities Web site, describing the anticipated sole-source award to the Motor Freight Carriers Association (MFCA), and on September 30, 2002, FMCSA awarded the MFCA a contract to conduct a Truck Driver Fatigue Management Study.

Recent research has underscored the influence of time of day on truck driver alertness. The same research has shown that there are significant individual differences in alertness during night driving, even when drivers have adequate sleep. Yet the trucking industry must operate 24 hours a day in order to meet customer demands. In addition, the highways are least congested between midnight and six a.m. The unionized less-than-truckload (LTL) segment has a long history of safe operations at night. Indeed, most of its over-the-road operations occur at night. A major reason for the safety record of MFCA companies is the professionalism of the drivers they employ—more than 8,000 of the 42,000 drivers have at least one million accident-free driving miles with the same company. This truck driver workforce offers an untapped source of knowledge about techniques and lifestyle practices that are used to manage fatigue during night operations.

Specifically, the study will randomly survey Teamster drivers in MFCA companies who regularly operate on