

National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners Public Meeting Summary June 22, 2005

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m.

**Rose A. McMurray
Associate Administrator for Policy and Program Development
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

Ms. McMurray introduced herself and noted that her office has responsibility for establishing the National Registry.

Administrative Remarks:

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

Introductory Remarks:

Ms. McMurray thanked everyone for attending and for their willingness to participate in the development of the proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners (NRCME) program. She emphasized the importance of all stakeholder input in the early stages of the Agency's thinking about the program and that any comments and suggestions were welcomed.

Key Points:

- It is important to introduce the National Registry program at this time and get stakeholder insight and feedback regarding the form, content and structure of the Registry before the Agency gets too far down the road in developing it.
- The meeting format consisted of presentations from several key speakers followed by a question and answer period. The reasoning behind the meeting format was to provide attendees the full context of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) preliminary thinking about the Registry, cover the major topical areas, and hear viewpoints, reactions or suggestions from the attendees.
- The mission, structure and background of FMCSA were described for audience members who were not familiar with the Agency.
- FMCSA is motivated to find solutions and is proactively seeking ways of reaching those goals because the Agency recognizes the toll 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 commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crashes. The area of medical qualifications and the physical condition of the Nation's truck and bus drivers is the cornerstone to improved safety.

- FMCSA is reliant upon 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 mission that all stakeholders recognize the importance of driver physical fitness and understand the occupational demands that are placed on those drivers in their daily course of business.
- The proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners initiative is of great importance because it is vital to know that CMV drivers are healthy and fit and that the medical standards developed for them are applied evenly and uniformly by the community of medical examiners who are conducting their examinations. FMCSA has significant respect for the medical training of those who perform the physical examinations, but it's important to ensure that all medical examiners are qualified and familiar with the occupational demands of commercial drivers and with FMCSA's regulatory requirements.

Speakers

Annette M. Sandberg
Administrator
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Introductory Remarks:

The Administrator thanked the attendees on behalf of President Bush and Transportation Secretary Mineta for participating.

Administrator Sandberg provided opening remarks about FMCSA's medical program in general and the National Registry in more specific terms, pointing out that the Agency was still in the early stages of developing the program. She made very clear her commitment to making the medical qualifications unit stronger and to generally upgrading the way FMCSA does business in the medical arena.

Key Points:

- FMCSA's focus is on safety, and it has responsibility to Congress to carry out programs in a responsible and economical manner.
- Preliminary data from the Large Truck Crash Causation Study, which is scheduled to be released later this summer, indicates that the driver, not the vehicle, should be the primary focus of the Agency's safety efforts.

- FMCSA currently has three major initiatives underway to improve the certification of drivers.

Initiative #1

Medical Review Board

Key Points

- Many regulations are out of date and need to be updated.
- The Medical Review Board (MRB) is a five-member panel of physicians who are experts and will advise the Agency on medical standards and emerging medical issues.
- Preliminary recruitment has begun, and the Board is expected to be up and running in fall, 2005.

Initiative #2

Merger of the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and Medical Certification Programs

Key Points

- This initiative would ultimately do away with the medical certificate and replace it with an electronic record that is part of the commercial driver's license.
- FMCSA is exploring alternative ways of incorporating medical requirements into the CDL issuance process through research being conducted by the state of Indiana.
- The rulemaking process is underway, with a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to be published in 2006.

Initiative #3

National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners

Key Points

- The National Registry is still under development, and stakeholder input is needed.
- There will be further meetings around the country to try to get as much stakeholder feedback as possible.
- The Agency's current proposal for the National Registry would provide a list of medical examiners who are authorized to perform the physical qualification examinations and required to maintain ongoing competency through training, testing, certification and recertification.

- Accreditation of the certification program is based on standards and is a critical component of the quality management for the program.
- If the National Registry is established, FMCSA will require all CMV drivers to obtain their medical certificates from a certified medical examiner listed on the Registry.
- FMCSA would like to see language about the National Registry included in legislation as it would reinforce the Agency's authority.
- The primary methods for information dissemination will be the Web site and a resource center with a toll-free telephone number.

Ellison Wittels, MD
Senior Medical Consultant
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Medical Considerations for Commercial Motor Vehicle Operator Examinations:

Dr. Wittels discussed medical considerations and concerns and how they relate to the National Registry and the driver physical examinations.

Key Points:

- There are four major reasons for establishing the National Registry: the size of the program, issues regarding medical examiner training, the aging workforce and the inconsistent use of resources by the medical examiners.
- The Medical Review Board will provide ongoing medical expertise to FMCSA and to the National Registry in order to keep the training up-to-date.
- FMCSA promotes medical community collaboration.
- FMCSA wants to make the commercial motor vehicle certification examination part of mainstream medicine.
- The Role Delineation Study (job task analysis) is essential to the National Registry program because it ensures that we teach what we need to teach and measure what we need to measure. It is critical to having a valid training program.
- The purpose of the National Registry is to support all medical examiners. The National Registry is not intended to decrease the number of medical examiners.
- One idea currently under consideration is that the core curriculum be provided to medical organizations, and the medical organizations can then provide training for their membership. In so doing, each organization will be able to add information to the core curriculum to meet the specific needs of its members.

- FMCSA wants to hold down the cost of this program by promoting participation of private sector training organizations.
- Input from the medical community is vital to the program's success.

Patrick Brown
NRCME Project Director
Axiom Resource Management, Inc.

History and Overview of the Proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners

Pat Brown provided the history, overview and FMCSA's current thoughts regarding the National Registry.

Key Points:

- It is vitally important to maintain ongoing competency of medical examiners through training, testing, certification and recertification.
- FMCSA wants to ensure that medical examiners fully understand the medical standards in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations and how they apply to commercial motor vehicle drivers.
- Accessibility is the key to the success of the program. Certified medical examiners will be listed on a database that will be available on the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners Web site at nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov.
- FMCSA wants to promote public confidence in the quality of the physical examinations of the drivers.
- Stakeholders for the National Registry program include medical examiners, CMV drivers, motor carriers, safety groups, the general public, Federal, State and local transportation agencies, labor unions and insurance organizations.
- Participants are needed as subject matter experts to help FMCSA conduct the studies and analyses necessary to develop the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners program.
- Quality management of the program is necessary because it provides compliance with approved standards of performance.
- Certification is necessary because of variation in medical examiner practices. Certification provides a uniform means of establishing competency based on standards.
- Accreditation is the recognition given by an association or agency to institutions that satisfy compliance with these standards. Third-party accreditation, one that is

disassociated from the certification process, provides the highest level of quality management and avoids bias. NRCME is seeking third-party accreditation from an agency such as the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).

- The job of driving a CMV is extremely complex.
- The National Registry includes several critical components: coordination with the Medical Review Board, a Role Delineation Study, an Education Guidelines Panel, and curriculum development and training.

Jon Jordan, MD
Federal Air Surgeon
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Aviation Medical Examiner Program

Dr. Jordan discussed the history of the FAA's Aviation Medical Examiner Program, the way the FAA certifies airmen for fitness for duty, and how what he's learned from that program may apply to the National Registry program.

Key Points:

- The FAA delegates authority to the aviation medical examiners to conduct examinations, and issue, deny or defer the issuance of medical certificates through a designation process.
- All applications and the results of the medical examinations are electronically transmitted to FAA where they are stored and reviewed as necessary.
- Aviation medical examiners can be either physicians or doctors of osteopathy.
- Aviation medical examiners must meet certain requirements to obtain and maintain their designation. They include competence to perform medical examinations and knowledge of FAA rules. They must personally conduct the examinations, comply with FAA training requirements, and be able to electronically transmit examination results.
- Training is a key component of the FAA designee program.
- Designees are required to pass an examination prior to designation and are required to undergo repeated training at three-year intervals given in the form of a three-day seminar.
- The FAA has a process for reviewing the electronic input of the examinations and tracking the performance of aviation medical examiners to ensure they are making correct determinations and conducting complete examinations.

- Reasons for termination of designation include: failure to perform examinations, failure to comply with training requirements, failure to maintain a professional office, violation of the law, conviction of violation of the law, loss of license to practice medicine and failure to electronically transmit the results of examinations.
- The reasons the FAA designee program is so successful include: careful selection of the designees, constant oversight of the designees, required training, and appropriate corrective action when a designee does not adequately perform their duties.

Dr. Jordan took questions from the audience.

Maggi Gunnels, PhD
Chief, Physical Qualifications Division
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Implementation & Implications of the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners Program

Key Points:

- Stakeholder input is of vital importance to the success of the National Registry program and the Medical Review Board.
- There will be opportunities for public comment for all of the activities associated with the National Registry and the Medical Review Board, including rules, standards, and advisory criteria that are developed.
- FMCSA receives hundreds of telephone calls, e-mails, faxes, and Congressional queries each week regarding medical issues and recognizes that there is a lot of work to do in the area of medical standards.
- The National Registry is just one initiative FMCSA is developing to improve the Agency's ability to monitor driver health and safety.
- The Agency is aware of problems with the medical certification process. These include scope of practice issues and inconsistent performance by medical examiners. The National Registry will address these problems.
- FMCSA uses science-based techniques to address these problems and to help review and develop standards, which is why FMCSA proposes that the National Registry be an accredited program.
- It's important that every medical examiner has knowledge of the rules and regulations and understands the truck environment and the occupational requirements placed on the drivers.

**Kaye Kirby
Physical Qualifications Division
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

FMCSA Perspectives

Kaye Kirby discussed the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's perspective on the National Registry and why the program is important.

Key Points:

- The Physical Qualifications Division was established in 2002 because the health of the driver is the key to commercial motor vehicle safety.
- The Medical Review Board will be in place by the end of this year and will make recommendations for revising scientific medical standards and guidelines for commercial motor vehicle drivers.
- The primary mission of the National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners is to improve highway safety by producing trained, certified medical examiners who can conduct these physical examinations.
- Stakeholder ideas and support are critical to the success of the National Registry program.
- There is a need for consistency in medical examiner training. The National Registry will ensure that the same core curriculum is given to all types of providers.
- Medical examiners who are knowledgeable about Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations will conduct more consistent examinations.
- Accreditation of both the training and certification programs for medical examiners is a key strategy for improving the quality of physical examinations of commercial motor vehicle drivers.

**Wade Delk, Executive Director
National Organization for Competency Assurance**

Certification and Accreditation Processes

Wade Delk discussed the importance of the certification and accreditation process.

Key Points:

- NOCA determines the things that are inherent in every certification program that make it a quality program.

- Certification programs concern the health, safety and welfare of the public and ensure that an organization understands why they are doing what they are doing and how it protects the public.
- The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is the accrediting arm of NOCA. They are experts within the accreditation and certification field that provide accreditation to those certification programs that meet the standards. They conduct administrative and psychometric reviews of all applications for certification.
- NCCA standards often exceed the requirements set forth by the American Psychological Association and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- The standards can be broken down into the following categories: purpose, responsibility to stakeholders, re-certification and the maintenance of accreditation and psychometrics.

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

Larry Minor moderated the question and answer session. (Approximately 1 ½ hours)

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.