

FMCSA may make its decision at any time after the close of the comment period. In addition to late comments, FMCSA will also continue to file, in the public docket, relevant information that becomes available after the comment closing date. Interested persons should continue to examine the public docket for new material.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 31136 and 31315; and 49 CFR 1.73.

Issued on: April 23, 2003.

Annette M. Sandberg,

Acting Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Notice of Application for Approval of Discontinuance or Modification of a Railroad Signal System or Relief From Requirements

Pursuant to title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 235 and 49 U.S.C. 20502(a), the following railroad has petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking approval for the discontinuance or modification of the signal system or relief from the requirements of 49 CFR part 236 as detailed below.

Docket Number FRA-2003-14646

Applicant: Canadian National Railway, Mr. Dwight Tays, Chief Engineer, 1004-104th Avenue, Floor 16, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J-0K2.

The Canadian National Railway (CN) seeks relief from the requirements of the Rules, Standards and Instructions, 49 CFR, part 236, § 236.110, to the extent that each test record need not be signed by the person making the inspection or test. CN is implementing an electronic system for recording and maintaining signal inspection and test records. The system will provide inherent security measures, which will uniquely identify the person entering the electronic record by means of an encoded PIN number. Once a record is entered and verified it cannot be modified. In conjunction with this relief, CN also requests the utilization of an electronic system for recording and maintaining applicable inspection and test records as defined in 49 CFR, part 234, subject to approval by the Associate Administrator for Safety, as required by § 234.273.

Applicant's justification for relief: CN believes that the electronic system will serve the best interest of both CN and the Federal and State Inspection authorities that are required to inspect

records. CN also anticipates this system will provide many benefits, including:

- Improved availability of test records.
- Improved management reporting of compliance.
- Improved consistency for filing records.
- A reduction in the need for paper documentation.

Any interested party desiring to protest the granting of an application shall set forth specifically the grounds upon which the protest is made, and include a concise statement of the interest of the party in the proceeding. Additionally, one copy of the protest shall be furnished to the applicant at the address listed above.

All communications concerning this proceeding should be identified by the docket number and must be submitted to the Docket Clerk, DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PI-401, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. Communications received within 45 days of the date of this notice will be considered by the FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable. All written communications concerning these proceedings are available for examination during regular business hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m.) at the above facility. All documents in the public docket are also available for inspection and copying on the internet at the docket facility's Web site at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FRA expects to be able to determine these matters without an oral hearing. However, if a specific request for an oral hearing is accompanied by a showing that the party is unable to adequately present his or her position by written statements, an application may be set for public hearing.

Issued in Washington, DC on April 23, 2003.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 03-10582 Filed 4-29-03; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA)

AGENCY: Maritime Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of open season for enrollment in fiscal year (FY) 2004 VISA Program.

Introduction

The VISA program was established pursuant to section 708 of the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended (DPA), which provides for voluntary agreements for emergency preparedness programs. VISA was approved for a two year term on January 30, 1997, and published in the **Federal Register** on February 13, 1997, (62 FR 6837). Approval was extended through February 13, 2005, and published in the **Federal Register** on February 25, 2003 (68 FR 8800).

As implemented, VISA is open to U.S.-flag vessel operators of militarily useful vessels, including bareboat charter operators if satisfactory signed agreements are in place committing the assets of the owner to the bareboat charterer for purposes of VISA. While tug/barge operators must own or bareboat charter barges committed to the VISA program, it is not required that these operators commit tug service through bareboat charter or ownership arrangements. Time charters of U.S.-flag tugs will satisfy commitments to the VISA program. By order of the Maritime Administrator on August 4, 1997, participation of U.S.-flag deepwater tug/barge operators in VISA was encouraged. Voyage, and space charterers are not considered U.S.-flag vessel operators for purposes of VISA eligibility.

VISA Concept

The mission of VISA is to provide commercial sealift and intermodal shipping services and systems, including vessels, vessel space, intermodal systems and equipment, terminal facilities, and related management services, to the Department of Defense (DOD), as necessary, to meet national defense contingency requirements or national emergencies.

VISA provides for the staged, time-phased availability of participants' shipping services/systems to meet contingency requirements through prenegotiated contracts between the Government and participants. Such arrangements are jointly planned with the Maritime Administration (MARAD), U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), and participants in peacetime to allow effective and best valued use of commercial sealift capacity, to provide DOD assured contingency access, and to minimize commercial disruption, whenever possible.

VISA Stages I and II provide for prenegotiated contracts between the DOD and participants to provide sealift capacity to meet all projected DOD