

required because distances are more compact than on highways. 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 35 of the 36 applicants listed in the June notice.

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 35 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 one comment in this proceeding. The comment was considered and is discussed below.

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 recent 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

After considering the comments to the docket and based upon its evaluation of the 35 exemption applications, the FMCSA exempts Gene E. Adams, Morris R. Beebe, William V. Beekler, Jerry W. Branning, Dennis R. Burda, James A. Busbin, Jr., Domenic J. Carassai, Theodore W. Cozat, Todd L. Dewey, John F. Dougherty, Fred W. Duran, Paul J. Edwards, Sr., William R. Evridge, Kenneth J. Fisk, Leslie W. Good, Michael E. Grens, Rodney P. Hains, Bruce E. Hemmer, Steven P. Holden, Russell R. Inlow, Christopher G. Jarvela, Henry Joiner, Darrell D. Kropf, Brad L. Mathna, William G. McClam, Vincent P. Miller, Warren J. Nyland, Dennis M. Prevas, Terry B. Pritchett, Greg L. Riles, Jon D. Schwengel, Steven R. Smith, Calvin D. Tomlinson, Mona J. van Krieken, and Paul S. Yocum from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), subject to the following conditions: (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, so it may be presented to a duly

authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official.

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: August 11, 2003.

Robert F. Proferes,

Acting Associate Administrator for Policy and Program Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Docket No. FRA-2000-7257]

Notice No. 31; Railroad Safety Advisory Committee; Notice of Meeting

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of Railroad Safety Advisory Committee ("RSAC") meeting.

SUMMARY: FRA announces the next meeting of the RSAC, a Federal Advisory Committee that develops railroad safety regulations through a consensus process. The RSAC meeting topics will include updates on the Safety Reauthorization Bill, the Illinois Department of Transportation Positive Train Control Project, and the Highway-Rail Crossing Action Plan. Status reports will be given on the Event Recorder, Locomotive Crashworthiness, Passenger Safety and other active working groups. The Committee will be briefed on the International Application of Alcohol and Drug Rules, and Medical Standards for Safety Critical Employees.

DATES: The meeting of the RSAC is scheduled to commence at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 4 p.m. on Thursday, September 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The meeting of the RSAC will be held at the Washington Plaza, 10 Thomas Circle, NW., Washington, DC 20005, (202) 842-1300. The meeting is open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis and is accessible to individuals with disabilities. Sign and