



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0102; FMCSA-2014-0104; FMCSA-2014-0384; FMCSA-2017-0057; FMCSA-2017-0058; FMCSA-2018-0136; FMCSA-2022-0035; FMCSA-2022-0037]

Qualification of Drivers; Exemption Applications; Hearing

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

ACTION: Notice of renewal of exemptions; request for comments.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to renew exemptions for 13 individuals from the hearing requirement in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) for interstate commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers. The exemptions enable these hard of hearing and deaf individuals to continue to operate CMVs in interstate commerce.

DATES: Each group of renewed exemptions were applicable on the dates stated in the discussions below and will expire on the dates provided below. Comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by the Federal Docket Management System Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0102, Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0104, Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0384, Docket No. FMCSA-2017-0057, Docket No. FMCSA-2017-0058, Docket No. FMCSA-2018-0136, Docket No. FMCSA-2022-0035, or Docket No. FMCSA-2022-0037 using any of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to www.regulations.gov/, insert the docket number (FMCSA-2014-0102, FMCSA-2014-0104, FMCSA-2014-0384, FMCSA-2017-0057, FMCSA-2017-0058, FMCSA-2018-0136, FMCSA-2022-

0035, or FMCSA-2022-0037) in the keyword box and click “Search.” Next, sort the results by “Posted (Newer-Older),” choose the first notice listed, and click on the “Comment” button. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

- Mail: Dockets Operations; U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building Ground Floor, Washington, DC 20590-0001.
- Hand Delivery: West Building Ground Floor, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590-0001, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.
- Fax: (202) 493-2251.

To avoid duplication, please use only one of these four methods. See the “Public Participation” portion of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION section for instructions on submitting comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Christine A. Hydock, Chief, Medical Programs Division, FMCSA, DOT, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Room W64-224, Washington, DC 20590-0001, (202) 366-4001, fmcsamedical@dot.gov. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. If you have questions regarding viewing or submitting material to the docket, contact Dockets Operations, (202) 366-9826.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Public Participation

A. Submitting Comments

If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this notice (Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0102, Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0104, Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0384, Docket No. FMCSA-2017-0057, Docket No. FMCSA-2017-0058, Docket No. FMCSA–2018–0136,

Docket No. FMCSA-2022-0035, or Docket No. FMCSA-2022-0037), indicate the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and provide a reason for each suggestion or recommendation. You may submit your comments and material online or by fax, mail, or hand delivery, but please use only one of these means. FMCSA recommends that you include your name and a mailing address, an email address, or a phone number in the body of your document so that FMCSA can contact you if there are questions regarding your submission.

To submit your comment online, go to www.regulations.gov/, insert the docket number (FMCSA-2014-0102, FMCSA-2014-0104, FMCSA-2014-0384, FMCSA-2017-0057, FMCSA-2017-0058, FMCSA-2018-0136, FMCSA-2022-0035, or FMCSA-2022-0037) in the keyword box and click “Search.” Next, sort the results by “Posted (Newer-Older),” choose the first notice listed, click the “Comment” button, and type your comment into the text box on the following screen. Choose whether you are submitting your comment as an individual or on behalf of a third party and then submit.

If you submit your comments by mail or hand delivery, submit them in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. FMCSA will consider all comments and material received during the comment period.

B. Viewing Comments

To view comments go to www.regulations.gov. Insert the docket number (FMCSA-2014-0102, FMCSA-2014-0104, FMCSA-2014-0384, FMCSA-2017-0057, FMCSA-2017-0058, FMCSA-2018-0136, FMCSA-2022-0035, or FMCSA-2022-0037) in the keyword box and click “Search.” Next, sort the results by “Posted (Newer-Older),” choose the first notice listed, and click “Browse Comments.” If you do not have access to the internet, you may view the docket online by visiting Dockets Operations on the ground floor of the DOT West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC

20590-0001, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 366-9317 or (202) 366-9826 before visiting Dockets Operations.

C. Privacy Act

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315(b)(6), DOT solicits comments from the public on the exemption requests. DOT posts these comments, without edit, including any personal information the commenter provides, to www.regulations.gov. As described in the system of records notice DOT/ALL 14 (Federal Docket Management System), which can be reviewed at <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/privacy/privacy-act-system-records-notice>, the comments are searchable by the name of the submitter.

II. Background

Under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), FMCSA may grant an exemption from the FMCSRs for no longer than a 5-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 statutes also allow the Agency to renew exemptions at the end of the 5-year period. FMCSA grants medical exemptions from the FMCSRs for a 2-year period to align with the maximum duration of a driver's medical certification.

The physical qualification standard for drivers regarding hearing found in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11) states that a person is physically qualified to drive a CMV if that person first perceives a forced whispered voice in the better ear at not less than 5 feet with or without the use of a hearing aid or, if tested by use of an audiometric device, does not have an average hearing loss in the better ear greater than 40 decibels at 500 Hz, 1,000 Hz, and 2,000 Hz with or without a hearing aid when the audiometric device is calibrated to American National Standard (formerly ASA Standard) Z24.5—1951.

This standard was adopted in 1970 and was revised in 1971 to allow drivers to be qualified under this standard while wearing a hearing aid, (35 FR 6458, 6463

(Apr. 22, 1970) and 36 FR 12857 (July 8, 1971), respectively).

The 13 individuals listed in this notice have requested renewal of their exemptions from the hearing standard in § 391.41(b)(11), in accordance with FMCSA procedures. Accordingly, FMCSA has evaluated these applications for renewal on their merits and decided to extend each exemption for a renewable 2-year period.

III. Request for Comments

Interested parties or organizations possessing information that would otherwise show that any, or all, of these drivers are not currently achieving the statutory level of safety should immediately notify FMCSA. The Agency will evaluate any adverse evidence submitted and, if safety is being compromised or if continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), FMCSA will take immediate steps to revoke the exemption of a driver.

IV. Basis for Renewing Exemptions

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), each of the 13 applicants has satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement. The 13 drivers in this notice remain in good standing with the Agency. In addition, the Agency has reviewed each applicant's certified driving record from their State Driver's Licensing Agency (SDLA). The information obtained from each applicant's driving record provides the Agency with details regarding any moving violations or reported crash data, which demonstrates whether the driver has a safe driving history and is an indicator of future driving performance. If the driving record revealed a crash, FMCSA requested and reviewed the related police reports and other relevant documents, such as the citation and conviction information. These factors provide an adequate basis for predicting each driver's ability to continue to safely operate a CMV in interstate commerce. Therefore, FMCSA concludes that extending the exemption for each of these

drivers for a period of 2 years is likely to achieve a level of safety equal to that existing without the exemption.

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), the following groups of drivers received renewed exemptions in the month of December and are discussed below.

As of December 16, 2024, and in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), the following nine individuals have satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement in the FMCSRs for interstate CMV drivers:

Blair Chappell (PA)	James Dignan (IL)	Ahmed Gabr (NC)
Arnold Hatton (DE)	Peter Mannella (WA)	Keith Miller (PA)
Scott Perdue (GA)	Allen Whitener (TX)	Eric Woods (MD)

The drivers were included in docket number FMCSA-2014-0102, FMCSA-2014-0104, FMCSA-2014-0384, FMCSA-2017-0057, FMCSA-2017-0058, FMCSA-2018-0136, or FMCSA-2022-0035. Their exemptions are applicable as of December 16, 2024 and will expire on December 16, 2026.

As of December 22, 2024, and in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), the following two individuals have satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement in the FMCSRs for interstate CMV drivers:

Michael Clark (MD); and Michael Piirainen (ME).

The drivers were included in docket number FMCSA-2022-0035. Their exemptions are applicable as of December 22, 2024 and will expire on December 22, 2026.

As of December 30, 2024, and in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), the following two individuals have satisfied the renewal conditions for

obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement in the FMCSRs for interstate CMV drivers:

Saranne Fewel (OK); and Jared Healan (CO).

The drivers were included in docket number FMCSA-2022-0037. Their exemptions are applicable as of December 30, 2024 and will expire on December 30, 2026.

V. Terms and Conditions

The exemptions are extended subject to the following conditions: each driver (1) must report to FMCSA any crashes as defined in § 390.5T, within 7 days of the crash; (2) must report to FMCSA any citations and convictions for disqualifying offenses under 49 CFR parts 383 and 391, within 7 days of the citation and conviction; (3) must submit to FMCSA annual certified driving records from their SDLA; and (4) is prohibited from operating a motorcoach or bus with passengers in interstate commerce. The driver must also have a copy of the exemption when driving, for presentation to a duly authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official. In addition, the driver must meet all the applicable commercial driver's license testing requirements. Each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless rescinded earlier by FMCSA. The exemption will be rescinded 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. 31136(e) and 31315(b).

VI. Preemption

During the period the exemption is in effect, no State shall enforce any law or regulation that conflicts with this exemption with respect to a person operating under the exemption.

VII. Conclusion

Based upon its evaluation of the 13 exemption applications, FMCSA renews the exemptions of the aforementioned drivers from the hearing requirement in § 391.41 (b)(11). In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless revoked earlier by FMCSA.

Larry W. Minor,
Associate Administrator for Policy.

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