



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2025-0025]

Qualification of Drivers; Exemption Applications; Hearing

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

ACTION: Notice of final disposition.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to exempt 12 individuals from the hearing requirement in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate commerce. The exemptions enable these hard of hearing and deaf individuals to operate CMVs in interstate commerce.

DATES: The exemptions were applicable on January 25, 2026. The exemptions expire on January 25, 2028.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Christine A. Hydock, Chief, Medical Programs Division, FMCSA, DOT, 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., Washington, DC 20590-0001; (202) 366-4001; fmcsamedical@dot.gov. Office hours are from 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. Viewing Comments

To view comments, go to www.regulations.gov. Insert the docket number (FMCSA-2025-0025) in the keyword box and click "Search." Next, choose the only 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 in room W58-213 of the DOT West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., 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.

B. 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, including any personal information the commenter provides, to www.regulations.gov, as described in the system of records notice DOT/ALL-14 FDMS (Federal Docket Management System), which can be reviewed under the “Department Wide System of Records Notices” link at <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/privacy/privacy-act-system-records-notice>. The comments are posted without edit and are searchable by the name of the submitter.

II. Legal Basis

FMCSA has authority under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b) to grant exemptions from the FMCSRs. FMCSA must publish a notice of each exemption request in the Federal Register (49 CFR 381.315(a)). The Agency must provide the public an opportunity to inspect the information relevant to the application, including the applicant’s safety analysis. The Agency must provide an opportunity for public comment on the request.

The Agency reviews the application, safety analyses, and public comments submitted and determines whether granting the exemption would likely achieve a level of safety equivalent to, or greater than, the level that would be achieved absent such exemption, pursuant to the standard set forth in 49 U.S.C. 31315(b)(1). The Agency must publish its decision in the Federal Register (49 CFR 381.315(b)). If granted, the notice will identify the regulatory provision from which the applicant will be exempt, the

effective period, and all terms and conditions of the exemption (49 CFR 381.315(c)(1)). If the exemption is denied, the notice will explain the reason for the denial (49 CFR 381.315(c)(2)). The exemption may be renewed (49 CFR 381.300(b)). FMCSA grants medical exemptions from the FMCSRs for a 2-year period to align with the maximum duration of a driver's medical certification.

III. Background

On December 19, 2025, FMCSA published a notice announcing receipt of applications from 12 individuals requesting an exemption from the hearing requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11) to operate a CMV in interstate commerce and requested comments from the public (90 FR 59644). The public comment period ended on January 20, 2026, and no comments were received.

FMCSA has evaluated the eligibility of these applicants and determined that granting exemptions to these individuals would likely achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to, or greater than, the level that would be achieved by complying with 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11).

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)).

IV. Discussion of Comments

FMCSA received no comments in this proceeding.

V. Basis for Exemption Determination

The Agency's decision regarding these exemption applications is based on relevant scientific information and literature, and the 2008 Evidence Report, "Executive Summary on Hearing, Vestibular Function and Commercial Motor Driving Safety."¹ The evidence report reached two conclusions regarding the matter of hearing loss and CMV driver safety: (1) no studies were identified that examined the relationship between hearing loss and crash risk exclusively among CMV drivers; and (2) evidence from studies of the private driver's license holder population does not support the contention that individuals with hearing impairment are at an increased risk for a crash. In addition, the Agency 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 used as 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. Each applicant's record demonstrated a safe driving history. Based on an individual assessment of each applicant that focused on whether an equivalent or greater level of safety would likely be achieved by permitting each of these drivers to drive in interstate commerce, the Agency did not find any evidence that the drivers granted this exemption pose a risk to public safety.

Consequently, FMCSA further finds that in each case, exempting these applicants from the hearing standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11) would likely achieve a level of safety

¹ <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/medical/hearing-vestibular-function-and-commercial-motor-vehicle-driver-safety-executive>.

equivalent to or greater than the level of safety that would be achieved without the exemption, consistent with the applicable standard in 49 U.S.C. 31315(b)(1).

VI. Terms and Conditions

The terms and conditions of the exemption are provided to the applicants in the exemption document and include the following: each driver (1) must report to FMCSA the date, location, and time of any crashes, as defined in 49 CFR 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 citations and convictions; (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 law enforcement official. In addition, the driver must meet all applicable commercial driver's license testing requirements.

VII. 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.

VIII. Conclusion

Based upon its evaluation of the 12 exemption applications, FMCSA exempts the following drivers from the hearing standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11), subject to the requirements cited above:

April Alvarez (IL)	Michael Bacarro (CA)
Ogheneovo Evro (CA)	Reno Lacey (AZ)
AD Lewter (AL)	Monte Nichols (WI)
Leonardo Pupo (WA)	Ruben Santiago (FL)
Halo Warner (NJ)	Jeremy Watts (AL)

Julie Young (MI)	Dayne Zimmerman (PA)
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In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315(b), and FMCSA's policy of issuing medical exemptions for a 2-year period to correspond with the medical certificate, each exemption will be valid for 2 years from the effective date unless revoked earlier by FMCSA. The exemption will be revoked if the following occurs: (1) the person fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the exemption as set forth above; (2) the exemption has resulted in a lower level of safety than was maintained prior to being granted; or (3) continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of Title 49, chapter 313 or section 31136.

Larry W. Minor,
Associate Administrator for Policy.

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