

modify environmental and other requirements external to Title 23.

FHWA announced the establishment of the TE-045 Project in a **Federal Register** notice published on April 8, 1994 (59 FR 16889). The purpose of TE-045 is to develop innovative financing concepts which have the potential to increase investment or reduce public agency costs. TE-045 projects must comply with non-Title 23 statutory and regulatory requirements such as NEPA, relocation assistance, etc.

Currently the application processes for the three experimental projects are not consistent. For example, the application and evaluation process for a SEP-16 proposal is a four-step process including submission of a Letter of Interest, Concept Paper, and Detailed Proposal. If the experiment proposed is accepted, then a Memorandum of Understanding is executed. The application and evaluation process for a SEP-15 proposal is a three-step process that involves submission of an application, issuance of an Acceptance Letter by FHWA, and execution of an Early Development Agreement. When there are uncertainties whether an experimental feature is appropriate for SEP-15, the State DOT may submit a Concept Paper to FHWA which may provide a basis to offer a preliminary assessment of the proposed experiment. The application process for TE-045 is a one-step process which only requires submission of a proposal. FHWA is proposing to restructure and standardize the application and evaluation process of proposed experiments under the three experimental projects. This notice seeks comments on the proposed process as outlined herein.

Proposed Application Process for SEP-16, SEP-15, and TE-045

The proposed application and evaluation process for the three experimental projects consists of two steps.

Step 1: Letter of Interest (LOI). A State DOT¹ submits a LOI to its respective FHWA Division Office. The LOI should provide a brief synopsis of the proposed experiment, typically no more than two pages, and should:

- a. Identify the experimental project proposed under TE-045, SEP-15, or SEP-16.
- b. Describe the proposed experiment including but not limited to identification of the section of Title 23,

U.S.C., 23 CFR, FHWA policy or guidance that would be tested and evaluated.

c. Demonstrate the State has, or will apply, the necessary controls and resources² to oversee the test and experiment, including identification of any project partners and their respective roles and responsibilities.

d. Provide a proposed duration for conducting the test and experimentation, including, as applicable, a timeline for any transition activities both before and after the experimental period.

e. Summarize the anticipated benefits including:

- Reasons why the State is seeking to undertake the experiment.
- Anticipated improvements to program or project delivery.
- Related cost or time savings.

Step 2: Work Plan. After reviewing the LOI and coordinating with FHWA Headquarters, the FHWA Division Office, in writing, either invites the State DOT to proceed with the development of a Work Plan or notifies the State DOT its proposal has not been accepted. If the proposal is accepted, the FHWA Division Office and the State DOT develop a Work Plan, in coordination with FHWA Headquarters, to carry out the accepted experiment under the respective TE-045, SEP-15 or SEP-16. The Work Plan will be a living document and may be modified as necessary during the duration of the experiment.

Although a Work Plan will be tailored to the respective TE-045, SEP-15 or SEP-16 at a minimum, all will include the following:

- a. Description of each accepted experiment and conditions under which the experiment will be conducted.
- b. Performance measures and evaluation criteria to evaluate the success of the experiment.
- c. Duration of the experiment and, as applicable, a transition plan to return to pre-experimental process and procedures.
- d. Reporting milestones to document the status and eventual outcome of the experiment. For each accepted experiment, reports shall include:
 - Description of the experiment.
 - Lessons learned.
 - Evaluation of the success of the experiment.

²For proposed experiments under SEP-16, the LOI should demonstrate that the State DOT has the necessary laws, regulations, controls, and resources in place to assume the Federal role for the responsibilities requested. If applicable, the State DOT may use experience with assumption of authorities under 23 U.S.C. 106(c) and other authorities to demonstrate readiness to assume the requested responsibilities.

○ Any recommend statutory, regulatory, and/or policy changes with an explanation of how the changes will improve the delivery of the Federal-aid highway program.

Conclusion

FHWA is committed to supporting opportunities to experiment with alternative and innovative approaches to implementing Federal-aid highway programs and projects. To this end, this notice seeks comments on a proposed uniform application and evaluation process for SEP-16, SEP-15, and TE-045 that is streamlined and more consistent across the three experimental projects.

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315 and 502.

Sean McMaster,

Administrator, Federal Highway Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2013-0122; FMCSA-2014-0106; FMCSA-2015-0326; FMCSA-2015-0328; FMCSA-2015-0329; FMCSA-2016-0002; FMCSA-2017-0059; FMCSA-2017-0060; FMCSA-2020-0026; FMCSA-2022-0033; FMCSA-2022-0034]

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 12 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 October 26, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments identified by Docket No. FMCSA-2013-0122, FMCSA-2014-0106, FMCSA-2015-0326, FMCSA-2015-0328, FMCSA-2015-0329, FMCSA-2016-0002, FMCSA-2017-0059, FMCSA-2017-0060, FMCSA-2020-0026,

¹ Under TE-045, SEP-15 and SEP-16 only State DOTs (23 U.S.C. 101) are eligible to submit proposed experiments. A State DOT may partner with localities and other transportation entities but in all cases a LOI and application must be submitted by a State DOT.

FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034, as appropriate, using any of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal*: Go to www.regulations.gov, insert the docket number FMCSA–2013–0122, FMCSA–2014–0106, FMCSA–2015–0326, FMCSA–2015–0328, FMCSA–2015–0329, FMCSA–2016–0002, FMCSA–2017–0059, FMCSA–2017–0060, FMCSA–2020–0026, FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034, as appropriate) 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, W58–213, Washington, DC 20590–0001.

- *Hand Delivery or Courier*: Dockets Operations, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, W58–213, Washington, DC 20590–0001, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., 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, 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.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Public Participation

A. Submitting Comments

If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this notice (FMCSA–2013–0122, FMCSA–2014–0106, FMCSA–2015–0326, FMCSA–2015–0328, FMCSA–2015–0329, FMCSA–2016–0002, FMCSA–2017–0059, FMCSA–2017–0060, FMCSA–2020–0026, FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034), 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–2013–0122, FMCSA–2014–0106, FMCSA–2015–0326, FMCSA–2015–0328, FMCSA–2015–0329, FMCSA–2016–0002, FMCSA–2017–0059, FMCSA–2017–0060, FMCSA–2020–0026, FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034) 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. Confidential Business Information (CBI)

CBI is commercial or financial information that is both customarily and actually treated as private by its owner. Under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), CBI is exempt from public disclosure. If your comments responsive to the notice contain commercial or financial information that is customarily treated as private, that you actually treat as private, and that is relevant or responsive to the notice, it is important that you clearly designate the submitted comments as CBI. Please mark each page of your submission that constitutes CBI as “PROPIN” to indicate it contains proprietary information. FMCSA will treat such marked submissions as confidential under the Freedom of Information Act, and they will not be placed in the public docket of the notice. Submissions containing CBI should be sent to Brian Dahlin, Chief, Regulatory Evaluation Division, Office of Policy, FMCSA, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590–0001 or via email at brian.g.dahlin@dot.gov. At this time, you need not send a duplicate hardcopy of your electronic CBI submissions to FMCSA headquarters. Any comments FMCSA receives not specifically designated as CBI will be placed in the public docket for this notice.

C. Viewing Comments

To view comments, go to www.regulations.gov. Insert the docket number (FMCSA–2013–0122, FMCSA–

2014–0106, FMCSA–2015–0326, FMCSA–2015–0328, FMCSA–2015–0329, FMCSA–2016–0002, FMCSA–2017–0059, FMCSA–2017–0060, FMCSA–2020–0026, FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034) 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 in room W58–213 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.

D. 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-notices>. 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 of safety 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

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)).

The 12 individuals listed in this notice have requested renewal of their exemptions from the hearing standard in 49 CFR 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.

IV. Request for Comments

Interested parties or organizations possessing information that would 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 the person has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the exemption, or if safety is being compromised or if continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of Title 49, chapter 313 or section 31136, FMCSA will take immediate steps to revoke the exemption of a driver.

V. Basis for Renewing Exemptions

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), each of the 12 applicants have satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement. The 12 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 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. Accordingly, 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 equivalent to, or greater than, the level of safety that would be achieved 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 September and are discussed below.

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), the following 11 individuals have satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement in the FMCSRs for interstate CMV drivers:

Weston Arthurs (CA)
Jerritt Boehle (IL)
Barry Carpenter (SD)
Michael Cover (MI)
Lyle Eash (OH)
Richard Hoots, III (AR)
Michael McCarthy (MN)
D'Nielle Smith (OH)
Michael Sweet Sr. (GA)
Darren Talley (NC)
Wayne Turner (IL)

The drivers were included in docket numbers FMCSA–2013–0122, FMCSA–2014–0106, FMCSA–2015–0326, FMCSA–2015–0328, FMCSA–2015–0329, FMCSA–2016–0002, FMCSA–2017–0059, FMCSA–2017–0060, FMCSA–2022–0033, or FMCSA–2022–0034. Their exemptions were applicable as of September 6, 2026, and will expire on September 6, 2028.

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315(b), Jonathan Kelly (TX) has satisfied the renewal conditions for obtaining an exemption from the hearing requirement in the FMCSRs for interstate CMV drivers.

This driver was included in docket number FMCSA–2020–0026. The exemption was applicable as of September 14, 2026, and will expire on September 14, 2028.

VI. Terms and Conditions

The exemptions are extended subject to the following conditions: each driver

(1) must report to FMCSA 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 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 law enforcement official. In addition, the driver must meet all the 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 renewal applications, FMCSA renews the exemptions of the above-named drivers from the hearing requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(11). 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; (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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DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request on Tax Return Preparer Complaint Process and Fraud or Misconduct Affidavit

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of information collection; request for comments.