

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration****[Docket No. FMCSA–2013–0275]****Hours of Service of Drivers: U.S. Department of Defense (DOD); Granting of Renewal of Exemption****AGENCY:** Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), DOT.**ACTION:** Notice of final disposition; grant of application for exemption.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to renew the exemption from the minimum 30-minute rest break provision of the Agency's hours-of-service (HOS) regulations for commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers working under contract to the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC). The exemption will enable SDDC's contract motor carriers and their employee-drivers engaged in the transportation of weapons, munitions, and sensitive/classified cargo to have the same regulatory flexibility that 49 CFR 395.1(q) provides for drivers transporting explosives. The exempted drivers will be allowed to use 30 minutes or more of attendance time to meet the HOS rest break requirements, providing they do not perform any other work during the break.

DATES: This exemption is effective from 12:01 a.m., October 22, 2015, through 11:59 p.m., October 21, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Pearl Robinson, FMCSA Driver and Carrier Operations Division; Office of Carrier, Driver, and Vehicle Safety Standards; Telephone: 202–366–4325. Email: MCPSD@dot.gov.

Docket. For access to the docket to read background documents or comments submitted to notice requesting public comments on the exemption application, go to www.regulations.gov at any time or visit Room W12–140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., ET, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The online Federal document management system is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. The docket number is listed at the beginning of this notice.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

FMCSA has authority under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315 to grant exemptions from certain parts of the Federal Motor

Carrier Safety Regulations. 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 any safety analyses that have been conducted. The Agency must also provide an opportunity for public comment on the request.

The Agency reviews 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 by the current regulation (49 CFR 381.305). The decision of the Agency must be published in the **Federal Register** (49 CFR 381.315(b)) with the reasons for denying or granting the application and, if granted, the name of the person or class of persons receiving the exemption, and the regulatory provision from which the exemption is granted. The notice must also specify the effective period and explain the terms and conditions of the exemption. The exemption may be renewed (49 CFR 381.300(b)).

Request for Exemption

Under 49 CFR 395.3(a)(3)(ii), a property-carrying CMV driver is prohibited from operating a CMV on a public road if more than eight hours have passed since the end of the driver's last off duty or sleeper-berth period of at least 30 minutes.

SDDC's initial exemption application for relief from the HOS rest break requirement was submitted in 2013; a copy of the application is in the docket identified at the beginning of this notice. That 2013 application describes fully the nature of the operations of SDDC's contracted drivers. The exemption was granted on October 28, 2013 (78 FR 64265). That exemption expires on October 21, 2015.

Certain motor carriers under contract to the SDDC provide protective services while transporting weapons, munitions, and sensitive/classified cargo. SDDC requested renewal of the rest-break exemption to allow its contract drivers to be treated the same as drivers transporting explosives. Section 395.1(q) allows drivers of CMVs carrying Division 1.1, 1.2, or 1.3 explosives who are subject to the requirement for a 30-minute off-duty rest break in § 395.3(a)(3)(ii) to use 30 minutes or more of on-duty "attendance time" to meet the requirement for a rest break, provided they perform no other work.

Method To Ensure an Equivalent or Greater Level of Safety

SDDC stated that it requires continuous attendance and surveillance of such shipments until they reach their final destination. SDDC also stated that it has instituted several technical and administrative controls to ensure the efficient transportation of cargo requiring protective services, controls that would remain in effect under the requested exemption. They include the following:

- Conducting review of carrier compliance requirements and procedures for moving hazardous cargo.
- Evaluating carrier authority to operate on U.S. roadways.
- Evaluating carrier compliance with FMCSA's Compliance Safety Accountability program and Safety Measurement System standards.
- Providing over-the-road vehicle surveillance.
- Inspecting carrier facilities and corporate headquarters for compliance with DOD and DOT standards.

Further details regarding SDDC's safety controls can be found in its application for exemption. The application can be accessed in the docket identified at the beginning of this notice. SDDC asserted that renewing the exemption would allow driver teams to manage their en route rest periods efficiently and also perform mandated shipment security surveillance, resulting in both safe driving performance and greater security of cargo during long-distance trips.

SDDC anticipates no safety impacts from this exemption and believes that its contract employee drivers should be allowed to follow the requirements in § 395.1(q) when transporting shipments of sensitive DOD cargo. SDDC believes that shipments made under the requested exemption would achieve a level of safety and security that is at least equivalent to that which would be obtained by following the normal break requirement in § 395.3(a)(3)(ii).

SDDC indicated that approximately 1,942 power units and 3,000 drivers would currently be eligible for the exemption, if renewed. The exemption would be effective for 2 years, the maximum period allowed by § 381.300. SDDC reported two crashes in 2014 in which drivers were cited. Neither crash was connected to fatigue that was related to the 30 minute break.

Public Comments

On April 16, 2015, FMCSA published notice of this application, and asked for public comment (80 FR 20556). No comments were submitted to the public docket.

FMCSA Decision

The FMCSA has evaluated SDDC's application for renewal of the exemption. The Agency believes that SDDC will likely achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to or greater than, the level of safety achieved without the exemption [49 CFR 381.305(a)]. The exempted drivers will receive 30 minutes or more of rest when required since they will be free of all duties other than "attending" the vehicle during the break periods. The safety objectives of the break requirement will be met; the only subject of the exemption is the duty status of the driver while attending the vehicle during a required rest break. Therefore, the Agency grants the exemption request subject to the terms and conditions in this **Federal Register** notice.

Terms of the Exemption

1. Drivers authorized by SDDC to utilize this exemption must have a copy of this exemption document in their possession while operating under the terms of the exemption. The exemption document must be presented to law enforcement officials upon request.

2. All motor carriers operating under this exemption must have a "Satisfactory" safety rating with FMCSA, or be "unrated;" motor carriers with "Conditional" or "Unsatisfactory" FMCSA safety ratings are prohibited from using this exemption.

3. All motor carriers operating under this exemption must have Safety Measurement System (SMS) scores below FMCSA's intervention thresholds, as displayed at <http://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/sms/>.

Period of the Exemption

This exemption from the requirements of 49 CFR 395.3(a)(3)(ii) is granted for the period from 12:01 a.m., October 22, 2015, through 11:59 p.m., October 21, 2017.

Extent of the Exemption

The exemption is restricted to SDDC's contract driver-employees transporting security-sensitive materials. This exemption is limited to the provisions of 49 CFR 395.3(a)(3)(ii) to allow contract driver-employees transporting security-sensitive materials to be treated the same as drivers transporting explosives, as provided in § 395.1(q). These drivers must comply with all other applicable provisions of the FMCSRs.

Preemption

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315(d), as implemented by 49 CFR

381.600, during the period this exemption is in effect, no State shall enforce any law or regulation applicable to interstate commerce that conflicts with or is inconsistent with this exemption with respect to a firm or person operating under the exemption. States may, but are not required to, adopt the same exemption with respect to SDDC contract operators in intrastate commerce.

Notification to FMCSA

The SDDC must notify FMCSA within 5 business days of any accident (as defined in 49 CFR 390.5), involving any of the motor carrier's CMVs operating under the terms of this exemption. The notification must include the following information:

- a. Exemption Identity: "SDDC,"
- b. Name of operating motor carrier and USDOT number,
- c. Date of the accident,
- d. City or town, and State, in which the accident occurred, or closest to the accident scene,
- e. Driver's name and driver's license number and State of issuance,
- f. Vehicle number and State license plate number,
- g. Number of individuals suffering physical injury,
- h. Number of fatalities,
- i. The police-reported cause of the accident,
- j. Whether the driver was cited for violation of any traffic laws or motor carrier safety regulations, and
- k. The driver's total driving time and total on-duty time period prior to the accident.

Reports filed under this provision shall be emailed to MCPSD@DOT.GOV.

Termination

FMCSA does not believe the drivers covered by this exemption will experience any deterioration of their safety record. However, should this occur, FMCSA will take all steps necessary to protect the public interest, including revocation or restriction of the exemption. The FMCSA will immediately revoke or restrict the exemption for failure to comply with its terms and conditions.

Issued on: September 25, 2015.

T.F. Scott Darling, III,

Acting Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2015-25520 Filed 10-6-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration**

[Docket No. FMCSA-2014-0106]

Qualification of Drivers; Application for Exemptions; Hearing

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

ACTION: Notice of final disposition.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to grant requests from 14 individuals for exemptions from the Agency's physical qualifications standard concerning hearing for interstate drivers. The current regulation prohibits hearing impaired individuals from operating CMVs in interstate commerce. After notice and opportunity for public comment, the Agency concluded that granting exemptions for these drivers to operate property-carrying CMVs will provide a level of safety that is equivalent to or greater than the level of safety maintained without the exemptions. The exemptions are valid for a 2-year period and may be renewed, and the exemptions preempt State laws and regulations.

DATES: The exemptions are effective October 7, 2015. The exemptions expire on October 10, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Charles A. Horan, III, Director, Office of Carrier, Driver and Vehicle Safety, (202) 366-4001, fmcsamedical@dot.gov, FMCSA, Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Room W64-224, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**A. Electronic Access**

You may see all the comments online through the Federal Document Management System (FDMS) at: www.regulations.gov.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments, go to www.regulations.gov and/or Room W12-140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Privacy Act: In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 553(c), DOT solicits comments from the public to better inform its rulemaking process. DOT posts these comments, without edit, including any personal information the commenter provides, to www.regulations.gov, as