

application to impose and use the revenue from a PFC at Springfield-Branson Regional Airport under the provisions of the Aviation Safety and Capacity Expansion Act of 1990 (Title IX of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990) (Public Law 101-508) and Part 158 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR Part 158). **DATES:** Comments must be received on or before March 4, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this application may be mailed or delivered in triplicate to the FAA at the following address: Federal Aviation Administration, Central Region, Airports Division, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, MO 64106.

In addition, one copy of any comments submitted to the FAA must be mailed or delivered to Mr. Robert D. Hancik, A.A.E., Director of Aviation, at the following address: Springfield-Branson Regional airport, Route 6, Box 364-15, Springfield, Missouri 65803.

Air carriers and foreign air carriers may submit copies of written comments previously provided to the City of Springfield, Springfield-Branson Regional Airport, under section 158.23 of Part 158.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lorna Sandridge, PFC Program Manager, FAA, Central Region, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, MO 64106, (816) 426-4730. The application may be reviewed in person at this same location.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FAA proposes to rule and invites public comment on the application to impose and use the revenue from a PFC at the Springfield-Branson Regional Airport under the provisions of the Aviation Safety and Capacity Expansion Act of 1990 (Title IX of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990) (Public Law 101-508) and part 158 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR Part 158).

On April 25, 1997, the FAA determined that the application to impose and use the revenue from a PFC submitted by the City of Springfield, Missouri, was not substantially complete within the requirements of section 158.25 of Part 158. The City of Springfield submitted supplemental information on December 16, 1997, to complete the application. The FAA will approve or disapprove the supplemental application, in whole or in part, no later than April 15, 1998.

The following is a brief overview of the application.

Level of the proposed PFC: \$3.00.

Proposed charge effective date: July, 1998.

Proposed charge expiration date: September, 1998.

Total estimated PFC revenue: \$8,435,114.

Brief description of proposed project(s): Conduct a terminal area master plan study; install a flight information display system; acquire snow removal equipment; acquire a leasehold, roadway improvements and expand baggage claim facility and ground transportation areas; install commuter walkways; and PFC administrative costs.

Any person may inspect the application in person at the FAA office listed above under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

In addition, any person may, upon request, inspect the application, notice and other documents germane to the application in person at the Springfield-Branson Regional Airport.

Issued in Kansas City, Missouri on January 16, 1998.

George A. Hendon,

Manager, Airports Division, Central Region.

[FR Doc. 98-2453 Filed 1-30-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Safety Performance Standards and Research and Development Programs Meetings

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of NHTSA Industry Meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting at which NHTSA will answer questions from the public and the automobile industry regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. In addition, NHTSA will hold a separate public meeting to describe and discuss specific research and development projects.

DATES: The Agency's regular, quarterly public meeting relating to its vehicle regulatory program will be held on March 17, 1998, beginning at 9:45 a.m. and ending at approximately 12:30 p.m. Questions relating to the vehicle regulatory program must be submitted in writing by February 23, 1998, to the address shown below. If sufficient time is available, questions received after February 23 may be answered at the meeting. The individual, group or company submitting a question(s) does not have to be present for the question(s) to be answered. A consolidated list of the questions submitted by February 23, 1998, and the

issues to be discussed, will be posted on NHTSA's web site (www.nhtsa.dot.gov) by March 13, 1998, and will be available at the meeting. Also, the agency will hold a second public meeting the same day March 17, at 1:30 p.m. devoted exclusively to a presentation of research and development programs. That meeting is described more fully in a separate announcement. The next NHTSA vehicle regulatory program meeting will take place on Tuesday, June 16, 1998 at the Clarion Inn Hotel, Wickham Road, in Romulus, MI. **ADDRESSES:** Questions for the March 17, NHTSA Technical Industry Meeting, relating to the agency's vehicle regulatory program, should be submitted to Delia Lopez, NPS-01, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Fax Number 202-366-4329. The meeting will be held at the Clarion Inn Hotel, 9191 Wickham Road, in Romulus, MI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Delia Lopez, (202) 366-1810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NHTSA holds a regular, quarterly meeting to answer questions from the public and the regulated industries regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. Questions on aspects of the agency's research and development activities that relate directly to ongoing regulatory actions should be submitted, as in the past, to the agency's Safety Performance Standard Office. The purpose of this meeting is to focus on those phases of NHTSA activities which are technical, interpretative or procedural in nature. Transcripts of these meetings will be available for public inspection in the NHTSA Technical Reference Section in Washington, DC, within four weeks after the meeting. Copies of the transcript will then be available at ten cents a page, (length has varied from 100 to 150 pages) upon request to NHTSA Technical Reference Section, Room 5108, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. The Technical Reference Section is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We would appreciate the questions you send us to be organized by categories to help us to process the questions in agenda form more efficiently. Same format as follows:

- I. Rulemaking
 - A. Crash avoidance
 - B. Crashworthiness
 - C. Other Rulemakings
- II. Consumer Information
- III. Miscellaneous

NHTSA will provide auxiliary aids to participants as necessary. Any person

desiring assistance of "auxiliary aids" (e.g., sign-language interpreter, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDDs), readers, taped texts, brailled materials, or large print materials and/or a magnifying device), please contact Delia Lopez on (202) 366-1810, by COB February 13, 1998.

Issued: January 27, 1998.

L. Robert Shelton,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

[FR Doc. 98-2454 Filed 1-30-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA 98-3343; Notice 1]

Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc.; Application for Temporary Exemption From Five Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards

Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc., of Vance, Alabama, has applied for a temporary exemption from five Federal motor vehicle safety standards on behalf of the Mercedes-Benz M Class vehicle. The basis of the application is that, in the absence of an exemption, the manufacturer would be prevented from selling a motor vehicle whose overall level of safety equals or exceeds that of a non-exempted vehicle. The exemption is sought for two years.

Notice of receipt of the application is published in accordance with agency regulations on the subject and does not represent any agency judgment on the merits of the application.

Under the authority of 49 U.S.C. 30113(b)(3)(iv), as implemented by 49 CFR 555.6(d), the NHTSA Administrator may exempt, on a temporary basis of up to two years, motor vehicles from compliance with a Federal motor vehicle safety standard upon a finding that "(iv) compliance with the standard would prevent the manufacturer from selling a motor vehicle with an overall safety level at least equal to the overall safety level of nonexempt vehicles" (The Administrator must also find that the exemption is in the public interest and consistent with objectives of traffic safety). The exemption covers up to 2,500 vehicles for any 12-month period that it is in effect.

Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, Inc. ("MBUSI") manufactures the Mercedes-Benz M Class sport utility vehicle. It has developed a version of the M Class for export which is manufactured to European

specifications. It proposes to sell a limited number of these vehicles to "European citizens" who "are either visiting or temporarily assigned to work in the United States." This program is similar to those in which a vehicle conforming to U.S. specifications is sold to Americans from various factories in Europe. MBUSI relates that its planned program is similar to one established by General Motors for which NHTSA granted GM's petition on August 18, 1988 (53 FR 31411).

Although not required by 49 CFR Part 555, "MBUSI is currently developing procedures that will ensure that the vehicles will, in fact, be exported within a one year time frame, or at the conclusion of a diplomatic assignment, whichever is applicable."

In MBUSI's view, it requires partial exemptions from five Federal motor vehicle safety standards if it is not to be prevented from selling the M Class. These are discussed below.

1. *Standard No. 101, Controls and Displays.* The European specification M Class brake indicator warning light depicts the ISO brake symbol, rather than the word "BRAKE" as required by Table II of Standard No. 101 (this is also a requirement imposed by Standard No. 105 *Hydraulic Brake Systems*).

MBUSI does not believe that this noncompliance degrades the safety of the vehicle. The ISO symbol is well known to the Europeans who will own and drive the M Class. On the other hand, the word "BRAKE" could be confusing to operators with a limited command of English.

2. *Standard No. 108, Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment.* Table II of Standard No. 108 requires vehicles such as the M Class to be equipped with front and rear side marker lamps and reflectors. These will be lacking. In addition, the headlamps are designed to meet the European photometric specifications of ECE R8 rather than those of Standard No. 108.

Although the M Class vehicles will lack side marker lamps and reflectors, they will be equipped with other lighting equipment not required by Standard No. 108, such as side turn signal repeaters. In addition, they will be equipped with front and rear fog lamps. Vehicles destined for Scandinavian countries will be equipped with daytime running lamps. In summary, the combined addition of these devices will, in MBUSI's opinion, add to the visibility of exempted vehicles.

With respect to headlamp photometrics, the exempted M Class would not meet the minimum candela prescribed by Standard No. 108 for the

upper beam. This affects eight test points. At these points, only 20 percent to 44.9 percent of the minimum required would be reached. With respect to the lower beam, there are two test points that fail to reach the minimum, one achieving 20.2 percent of the required figure and the other 71 percent. At test point 10U-90U, the maximum candela established by Standard No. 108 is exceeded by 270.4 percent.

MBUSI relates that the "continental European low beam pattern puts less light into the eyes of oncoming drivers * * * thereby reducing the glare experienced by oncoming drivers." Although the headlamps do not project as much light down the road as U.S. headlamps, there are differing opinions "as to which set of photometric requirements offers the optimum compromise in satisfying competing safety objectives." Some countries permit both European and U.S. specification headlamps, but there are no data from these countries suggesting that one type is over or under represented in crashes.

With respect to the upper beam, MBUSI states that the lamps do meet the minimum for test point HV, but not the minima at 9 degrees right and left and 12 degrees right and left. Because the European owners will be accustomed to the forward illumination characteristics of European beam patterns, "the lighting on these vehicles should provide 'equivalent safety' for these drivers.

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3. *Standard No. 111, Rear View Mirrors.* The passenger side convex rear view mirror will not contain the warning required by S5.4.2 for American-market cars that "Objects in Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear."

According to the applicant, the European drivers will be familiar with outside convex mirrors because they are used throughout Europe without a legend affixed. No safety value is added by requiring the legend to be etched into the mirror.

4. *Standard No. 120, Tires for Vehicles Other Than Passenger Cars.* The M Class exempted vehicles will not carry a tire information label as required by S5.3 of Standard No. 120.

However, there will be a European tire pressure information label adjacent to the fuel filler opening, the location for many European vehicles. Since Europeans are accustomed to that location for the tire information label, there is no safety value added by placing the label in the locations required under the standard. In addition, the tire information label must