

Visalia/Hanford/Tulare area will also be evaluated in this Project EIR/EIS.

Probable Effects: The purpose of the EIR/EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FRA and the Authority will continue the tiered evaluation of all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the HST system. Impact areas to be addressed include transportation impacts; safety and security; land use and zoning; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations; agricultural land impacts; cumulative and secondary impacts; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; and natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration, energy, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

The Merced to Bakersfield HST Project EIR/EIS will be prepared in accordance with FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545 [May 26, 1999]) and will address not only NEPA and CEQA but will also address as necessary other applicable statutes, regulations, and executive orders, including the Clean Air Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice.

This EIR/EIS process will also continue the NEPA/Clean Water Act Section 404 integration process established through the Statewide Program EIR/EIS process. The EIR/EIS will evaluate project alignment alternatives, and station and maintenance facility locations to support a determination of the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative ("LEDPA") by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Scoping and Comments: FRA encourages broad participation in the EIS process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments are invited from all interested agencies and the public to ensure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. In particular, FRA is interested in

determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant site-specific impacts. Public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise FRA and the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public agencies are requested to advise FRA if they anticipate taking a major action in connection with the proposed project and if they wish to cooperate in the preparation of the Project EIR/EIS. Public scoping meetings have been scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and Federal environmental review. The scoping meetings described in this Notice will also be the subject of additional public notification.

FRA is seeking participation and input of all interested Federal, State, and local agencies, Native American groups, and other concerned private organizations or individuals on the scope of the EIR/EIS. Implementation of the Merced to Bakersfield section of the HST system is a Federal undertaking with the potential to affect historic properties. As such, it is subject to the requirements of section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470f). In accordance with regulations issued by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 36 CFR part 800, FRA intends to coordinate compliance with section 106 of this Act with the preparation of the EIR/EIS, beginning with the identification of consulting parties through the scoping process, in a manner consistent with the standards set out in 36 CFR 800.8.

Issued in Washington, DC, on March 9, 2009.

Ray LaHood,

Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation.
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-2008-0118; Notice 2]

Continental Tire North America, Inc., Grant of Petition for Decision of Inconsequential Noncompliance

Continental Tire North America, Inc. (Continental), has determined that certain passenger car tires manufactured during December of 2007 and January of

2008 did not fully comply with paragraph S5.5(e) of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 139 *New Pneumatic Radial Tires for Light Vehicles*. Continental has filed an appropriate report pursuant to 49 CFR part 573, *Defect and Noncompliance Responsibility and Reports*.

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 30118(d) and 30120(h) and the rule implementing those provisions at 49 CFR part 556, Continental has petitioned for an exemption from the notification and remedy requirements of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301 on the basis that this noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety. Notice of receipt of the petition was published, with a 30-day public comment period, on June 26, 2008 in the **Federal Register** (73 FR 36371). No comments were received. To view the petition and all supporting documents log onto the Federal Docket Management System Web site at: <http://www.regulations.gov/>. Then follow the online search instructions to locate docket number "NHTSA-2008-0118."

For further information on this decision, contact Mr. George Gillespie, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), telephone (202) 366-5299, facsimile (202) 366-7002.

Affected are approximately 1,925 size 255/60R17 106 H Continental CrossContact LX ETRTO passenger car tires manufactured in Continental's Mount Vernon, Illinois plant during December of 2007 and January of 2008.

Paragraph S5.5(e) of FMVSS No. 139 requires in pertinent part:

S5.5 Tire markings. Except as specified in paragraphs (a) through (i) of S5.5, each tire must be marked on each sidewall with the information specified in S5.5(a) through (d) and on one sidewall with the information specified in S5.5(e) through (i) according to the phase-in schedule specified in S7 of this standard. The markings must be placed between the maximum section width and the bead on at least one sidewall, unless the maximum section width of the tire is located in an area that is not more than one-fourth of the distance from the bead to the shoulder of the tire. If the maximum section width falls within that area, those markings must appear between the bead and a point one-half the distance from the bead to the shoulder of the tire, on at least one sidewall. The markings must be in letters and numerals not less than 0.078 inches high and raised above or sunk below the tire surface not less than 0.015 inches * * *.

(e) The generic name of each cord material used in the plies (both sidewall and tread area) of the tire; * * *.

Continental explains that the noncompliance is that the sidewall marking incorrectly identifies the

generic material of the plies in the body of the tire as rayon when they are in fact polyester. Specifically, the tires in question were inadvertently manufactured with "TREAD 6 PLYS 2 RAYON + 2 STEEL + 2 NYLON SIDEWALL 2 PLYS 2 RAYON" marked on the sidewall. The labeling should have been "TREAD 6 PLYS 2 POLYESTER + 2 STEEL + 2 NYLON SIDEWALL 2 PLYS 2 POLYESTER."

Continental states that it discovered the mold labeling error that caused the non-compliance during a routine quality audit.

Continental makes the argument that this noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety because the noncompliant sidewall marking does not affect the safety, performance and durability of the tire and that the tires were built as designed and all other sidewall identification markings and safety information are correct.

Continental further states that it performs ongoing compliance testing to assure tire performance, and that all of the subject tires will meet or exceed the performance requirements of FMVSS No. 139. Continental also states its belief that there will be no operational impact on the performance or safety of vehicles on which these tires are mounted.

Continental also points out that NHTSA has previously granted petitions for sidewall marking noncompliances that it believes are similar to the instant noncompliance.

Continental also stated that it has corrected the problem that caused these errors so that they will not be repeated in future production.

In summation, Continental states that it believes that because the noncompliances are inconsequential to motor vehicle safety that no corrective action is warranted.

NHTSA Decision

The agency agrees with Continental that the noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety. The agency believes that the true measure of inconsequentiality to motor vehicle safety in this case is that there is no effect of the noncompliance on the operational safety of vehicles on which these tires are mounted. The safety of people working in the tire retread, repair, and recycling industries must also be considered. Although tire

construction affects the strength and durability, neither the agency nor the tire industry provides information relating tire strength and durability to the number of plies and types of ply cord material in the tread and sidewall. Therefore, tire dealers and customers should consider the tire construction information along with other information such as the load capacity, maximum inflation pressure, and tread wear, temperature, and traction ratings, to assess performance capabilities of various tires. In the agency's judgment, the incorrect labeling of the tire construction information will have an inconsequential effect on motor vehicle safety because most consumers do not base tire purchases or vehicle operation parameters on the ply material in a tire.

The agency also believes the noncompliance will have no measurable effect on the safety of the tire retread, repair, and recycling industries. The use of steel cord construction in the sidewall and tread is the primary safety concern of these industries. In this case, since the tire sidewalls are marked correctly for the number of steel plies, this potential safety concern does not exist.

In consideration of the foregoing, NHTSA has decided that Continental has met its burden of persuasion that the subject FMVSS No. 139 labeling noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety. Accordingly, Continental's petition is granted and the petitioner is exempted from the obligation of providing notification of, and a remedy for, the subject noncompliance under 49 U.S.C. 30118 and 30120.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30118, 30120; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: March 10, 2009.

Daniel C. Smith,

Associate Administrator for Enforcement.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

Office of Hazardous Materials Safety: Notice of Application for Special Permits

AGENCY: Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), DOT.

ACTION: List of Applications for Special Permits.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the procedures governing the application for, and the processing of, special permits from the Department of Transportation's Hazardous Material Regulations (49 CFR Part 107, Subpart B), notice is hereby given that the Office of Hazardous Materials Safety has received the application described herein. Each mode of transportation for which a particular special permit is requested is indicated by a number in the "Nature of Application" portion of the table below as follows: 1—Motor vehicle, 2—Rail freight, 3—Cargo vessel, 4—Cargo aircraft only, 5—Passenger-carrying aircraft.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 15, 2009.

Address Comments To: Record Center, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration U.S. Department of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590.

Comments should refer to the application number and be submitted in triplicate. If confirmation of receipt of comments is desired, include a self-addressed stamped postcard showing the special permit number.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of the applications are available for inspection in the Records Center, East Building, PHH-30, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, Southeast, Washington DC or at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

This notice of receipt of applications for special permit is published in accordance with Part 107 of the Federal hazardous materials transportation law (49 U.S.C. 5117(b); 49 CFR 1.53(b)).

Issued in Washington, DC, on March 06, 2009.

Delmer F. Billings,

Director, Office of Materials Hazardous, Special Permits and Approvals.