

Social Security

Emergency Message

Effective Dates: 06/22/2024 - Present

Identification Number: EM-24026

Intended Audience: All RCs/ARCs/ADs/FOs/TSCs/PSCs/OCO/OCO-CSTs/OHO/OARO/ DDSs/DPBs/DPU

Originating Office: ORDP ODP

Title: Isolated Occupations We Will Not Use to Support a "Not Disabled" Finding at Step Five of the Sequential Evaluation Process

Type: EM - Emergency Messages

Program: Disability

Link To Reference: See References at the end of this EM.

Retention Date:05/28/2026

A. Purpose

This emergency message (EM) identifies certain Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) occupations that are isolated. "Isolated" occupations are occupations with jobs that "exist only in very limited numbers in relatively few locations outside of the region where [the individual lives]"; 20 CFR 404.1566(b) and 416.966(b). This EM also explains that adjudicators may not cite work in those occupations to support a "not disabled" determination or decision that uses the medical-vocational guidelines (20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2) as a framework for decision making.

IMPORTANT: This guidance does not apply to determinations or decisions that are based on an individual's ability to do past relevant work. Accordingly, adjudicators may continue to rely on isolated jobs at step four of the disability evaluation process.

B. Background

At step five in the sequential evaluation process for adult disability claims (and at the corresponding step in the medical improvement review standard used in continuing disability reviews), we must determine whether, considering their residual functional capacity (RFC), age, education, and work experience, an individual can adjust to other work that exists in significant numbers in the national economy. In determinations and decisions in which the medical-vocational guidelines do not direct an outcome under our rules, we use the medical-vocational guidelines as a framework for decision

making. When we use the medical-vocational guidelines as a framework and make a finding of "not disabled," we must support the finding with evidence that an individual can adjust to work that exists in significant numbers in the national economy. Under our rules, isolated jobs are jobs that "exist only in very limited numbers in relatively few locations outside of the region where [the individual lives]." 20 CFR 404.1566 and 416.966. Occupations with isolated jobs are therefore not considered "work which exists in the national economy."

In the medical-vocational guidelines and our other rules, we take administrative notice of the DOT and its companion publication, the Selected Characteristics of Occupations Defined in the Revised Dictionary of Occupational Titles (SCO), as reliable sources of information. While these publications provide information about the requirements of work, they do not provide information about how much work exists within occupations or where such work exists within the national economy.

In developing this guidance, we used current federal employment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) program for the years 2020 to 2022. The OEWS program publishes data using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. First, we summed the OEWS state level employment data for each year by U.S. Census Division. The Census Divisions divide the states into nine geographical areas, as is explained [here](#) . Then, we identified the SOC occupations with fewer than 1,000 employees in each of the nine U.S. Census Divisions in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 OEWS panels. There are 35 SOC occupations that meet these criteria. We then identified the corresponding DOT occupations, using the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) DOT crosswalk file ([available here](#)). Using this method, we identified 114 DOT occupations, each of which corresponds to one of the 35 SOC occupations with jobs that exist in very limited numbers in each U.S. Census Division. We will now consider these 114 DOT occupations isolated in all regions of the country.

C. Policy

Under 20 CFR 404.1566 and 416.966, when we make a determination or decision at step five of the sequential evaluation, we will not deny disability benefits based on the existence of isolated jobs which exist only in very limited numbers in relatively few locations outside of the region where the individual lives. We have determined that the DOT occupations listed below currently satisfy the regulatory definition of isolated jobs in all regions of the country.

Our adjudicators may not support a "not disabled" determination or decision under the framework of the medical-vocational guidelines by citing any of the following occupations as examples of other work an individual can perform. We will remove an occupation from this list if we later determine that occupational data demonstrate that it is no longer isolated.

DOT Code	DOT Occupational Title	DOT Industry Designation(s)
013.061-010	AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER	professional and kindred occupations
013.061-014	AGRICULTURAL-RESEARCH ENGINEER	professional and kindred occupations
013.061-018	DESIGN-ENGINEER, AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT	professional and kindred occupations
013.061-022	TEST ENGINEER, AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT	professional and kindred occupations
021.067-010	ASTRONOMER	professional and kindred occupations
029.067-010	GEOGRAPHER	professional and kindred occupations
029.067-014	GEOGRAPHER, PHYSICAL	professional and kindred occupations
045.061-014	PSYCHOLOGIST, ENGINEERING	professional and kindred occupations
045.107-030	PSYCHOLOGIST, INDUSTRIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL	professional and kindred occupations
052.067-014	DIRECTOR, STATE-HISTORICAL SOCIETY	professional and kindred occupations
052.067-018	GENEALOGIST	professional and kindred occupations

052.067-022	HISTORIAN	professional and kindred occupations
052.067-026	HISTORIAN, DRAMATIC ARTS	professional and kindred occupations
052.167-010	DIRECTOR, RESEARCH	motion picture; radio and television broadcasting
072.101-018	ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL SURGEON	medical services
072.101-034	PROSTHODONTIST	medical services
193.162-022	AIRLINE-RADIO OPERATOR, CHIEF	air transportation; business services
193.262-010	AIRLINE-RADIO OPERATOR	air transportation; business services
193.262-014	DISPATCHER	government services
193.262-022	RADIO OFFICER	water transportation
193.262-026	RADIO STATION OPERATOR	aircraft manufacturing
193.262-030	RADIOTELEGRAPH OPERATOR	telephone and telegraph
193.262-034	RADIOTELEPHONE OPERATOR	any industry
193.362-010	PHOTORADIO OPERATOR	printing and publishing; telephone and telegraph
193.362-014	RADIO-INTELLIGENCE OPERATOR	government services
193.382-010	ELECTRONIC INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS SPECIALIST	military services
203.562-010	WIRE-TRANSFER CLERK	financial institutions

235.462-010	CENTRAL-OFFICE OPERATOR	telephone and telegraph
235.562-010	CLERK, ROUTE	telephone and telegraph
235.662-018	DIRECTORY-ASSISTANCE OPERATOR	telephone and telegraph
236.562-010	TELEGRAPHER	railroad transportation
236.562-014	TELEGRAPHER AGENT	railroad transportation
237.367-034	PAY-STATION ATTENDANT	telephone and telegraph
239.382-010	WIRE-PHOTO OPERATOR, NEWS	printing and publishing
297.667-014	MODEL	garment; retail trade; wholesale trade
299.647-010	IMPERSONATOR, CHARACTER	any industry
305.281-010	COOK	domestic service
338.371-010	EMBALMER APPRENTICE	personal service
338.371-014	EMBALMER	personal service
379.384-010	SCUBA DIVER	any industry
410.161-010	ANIMAL BREEDER	agriculture and agricultural service
410.161-014	FUR FARMER	agriculture and agricultural service
410.161-018	LIVESTOCK RANCHER	agriculture and agricultural service
410.161-022	HOG-CONFINEMENT-SYSTEM MANAGER	agriculture and agricultural service
411.161-010	CANARY BREEDER	agriculture and agricultural service

411.161-014	POULTRY BREEDER	agriculture and agricultural service
413.161-014	REPTILE FARMER	agriculture and agricultural service
452.167-010	FIRE WARDEN	forestry
452.367-010	FIRE LOOKOUT	forestry
452.367-014	FIRE RANGER	forestry
455.367-010	LOG GRADER	logging; sawmill and planing mill
455.487-010	LOG SCALER	logging; millwork, veneer, plywood, and structural wood members; paper and pulp; sawmill and planing mill
519.684-010	LADLE LINER	foundry; smelting and refining
519.684-022	STOPPER MAKER	blast furnace, steel work, and rolling and finishing mill
579.664-010	CLAY-STRUCTURE BUILDER AND SERVICER	glass manufacturing
661.281-010	LOFT WORKER	ship and boat manufacturing and repairing
661.281-018	PATTERNMAKER APPRENTICE, WOOD	foundry
661.281-022	PATTERNMAKER, WOOD	foundry
661.380-010	MODEL MAKER, WOOD	any industry
690.682-078	STITCHER, SPECIAL MACHINE	boot and shoe

690.682-082	STITCHER, STANDARD MACHINE	boot and shoe
690.685-494	STITCHER, TAPE-CONTROLLED MACHINE	boot and shoe
693.261-018	MODEL MAKER	aircraft-aerospace manufacturing
714.281-010	AIRCRAFT-PHOTOGRAPHIC-EQUIPMENT MECHANIC	photographic apparatus and materials
714.281-014	CAMERA REPAIRER	photographic apparatus and materials
714.281-018	MACHINIST, MOTION-PICTURE EQUIPMENT	motion picture; photographic apparatus and materials
714.281-022	PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT TECHNICIAN	photographic apparatus and materials
714.281-026	PHOTOGRAPHIC-EQUIPMENT-MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	photographic apparatus and materials
714.281-030	SERVICE TECHNICIAN, COMPUTERIZED-PHOTOFINISHING EQUIPMENT	photofinishing
715.281-010	WATCH REPAIRER	clocks watches, and allied products
715.281-014	WATCH REPAIRER APPRENTICE	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-010	ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-014	ASSEMBLER, WATCH TRAIN	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-018	BANKING PIN ADJUSTER	clocks watches, and allied products
715.381-022	BARREL ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products

715.381-026	BARREL-BRIDGE ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-030	BARREL-ENDSHAKE ADJUSTER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-038	CHRONOMETER ASSEMBLER AND ADJUSTER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-042	CHRONOMETER-BALANCE-AND-HAIRSPRING ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-054	HAIRSPRING ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-062	HAIRSPRING VIBRATOR	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-082	PALLET-STONE INSERTER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-086	PALLET-STONE POSITIONER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.381-094	WATCH ASSEMBLER	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.584-014	REPAIRER, AUTO CLOCKS	clocks, watches, and allied products
715.681-010	TIMING ADJUSTER	clocks, watches, and allied products
761.381-014	JIG BUILDER	wooden container
788.684-114	THREAD LASTER	boot and shoe
826.261-010	FIELD-SERVICE ENGINEER	photographic apparatus and materials
841.381-010	PAPERHANGER	construction
841.684-010	BILLPOSTER	business services
849.484-010	BOILER RELINER, PLASTIC BLOCK	foundry
850.663-010	DREDGE OPERATOR	construction; coal, metal, and

		nonmetal mining and quarrying
861.381-046	TERRAZZO WORKER	construction
861.381-050	TERRAZZO-WORKER APPRENTICE	construction
861.664-014	TERRAZZO FINISHER	construction
899.261-010	DIVER	any industry
899.684-010	BONDACTOR-MACHINE OPERATOR	foundry
910.362-010	TOWER OPERATOR	railroad transportation
910.363-018	YARD ENGINEER	railroad transportation
910.382-010	CAR-RETARDER OPERATOR	railroad transportation
910.583-010	LABORER, CAR BARN	railroad transportation
910.683-010	HOSTLER	railroad transportation
910.683-022	TRANSFER-TABLE OPERATOR	railroad equipment building and repairing; railroad transportation
911.663-010	MOTORBOAT OPERATOR	any industry
919.663-014	DINKEY OPERATOR	any industry
919.683-010	DOCK HAND	air transportation
919.683-026	TRACKMOBILE OPERATOR	any industry
930.683-026	ROOF BOLTER	coal, metal, and nonmetal mining and quarrying

952.362-022	POWER-REACTOR OPERATOR	utilities
960.362-010	MOTION-PICTURE PROJECTIONIST	amusement and recreation; motion picture
960.382-010	AUDIOVISUAL TECHNICIAN	any industry
961.367-010	MODEL, PHOTOGRAPHERS'	any industry
961.667-010	MODEL, ARTISTS'	any industry

D. Questions

Disability Determination Services (DDS) personnel should direct all other program-related and technical questions to their Regional Office (RO) support staff using vHelp or Program Service Center (PSC) Operations Analysis (OA) staff. RO support staff or PSC OA staff may refer questions, concerns, or problems to their Central Office contacts.

Office of Hearings Operations personnel should direct questions through their office's management chain. Regional staff may direct questions about this matter to the Division of Field Procedures in the Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge.

Office of Appellate Operations personnel should direct questions through their management chain. Managers may direct further questions to the Executive Director's Office.

References:

- 20 CFR 404.1560, 404.1566, 416.960, and 416.966
- DI 25025.030 Support for a Framework "Not Disabled" Determination
- HALLEX I-2-5-48 Vocational Experts - General
- HALLEX I-2-5-57 Obtaining Vocational Expert Testimony Through Interrogatories
- HALLEX I-2-6-74 Testimony of a Vocational Expert