

§ 220.130 Work experience as a vocational factor.

(a) *General.* *Work experience* means skills and abilities the claimant has acquired through work he or she has done which show the type of work he or she may be expected to do. Work the claimant has already been able to do shows the kind of work that he or she may be expected to do. The Board considers that the claimant's work experience is relevant and applies when it was done within the last 15 years, lasted long enough for him or her to learn to do it, and was substantial gainful activity. This work experience is called "past relevant work." The Board does not usually consider that work the claimant did 15 years or more before the time the Board is deciding whether he or she is disabled (or when the disability insured status requirement was last met, if earlier) applies. A gradual change occurs in most jobs so that after 15 years, it is no longer realistic to expect that skills and abilities acquired in a job done then continue to apply. The 15-year guide is intended to insure that remote work experience is not currently applied. If the claimant has no work experience or worked only "off-and-on" or for brief periods of time during the 15-year period, the Board generally considers that these do not apply. If the claimant has acquired skills through his or her past work, the Board considers the claimant to have these work skills unless he or she cannot use them in other skilled or semi-skilled work that he or she can do. If the claimant cannot use his or her skills in other skilled or semi-skilled work, the Board will consider his or her work background the same as unskilled. However, even if the claimant has no work experience, the Board may consider that the claimant is able to do unskilled work because it requires little or no judgment and can be learned in a short period of time.

(b) *Information about the claimant's work.* (1) Sometimes the Board will need information about the claimant's past work to make a disability determination. The Board may request work information from—

- (i) The claimant; and
- (ii) The claimant's employer or other person who knows about the claimant's

work (member of family or co-worker) with the claimant's permission.

(2) The Board will ask for the following information about all the jobs the claimant has had in the last 15 years:

- (i) The dates the claimant worked.
- (ii) All the duties the claimant did.
- (iii) Any tools, machinery, and equipment the claimant used.
- (iv) The amount of walking, standing, sitting, lifting and carrying the claimant did during the work day, as well as any other physical and mental duties of the job.

(3) If all the claimant's work in the past 15 years has been arduous and unskilled, and the claimant has very little education, the Board will ask the claimant to tell about all of his or her work from the time he or she first began working. (See § 220.45(b).)

§ 220.131 Work which exists in the national economy.

(a) *General.* The Board considers that work exists in the national economy when it exists in significant numbers either in the region where the claimant lives or in several other regions of the country. It does not matter whether—

- (1) Work exists in the immediate area in which the claimant lives,
- (2) A specific job vacancy exists for the claimant; or
- (3) The claimant would be hired if the claimant applied for work.

(b) *How the Board determines the existence of work.* Work exists in the national economy when there are a significant number of jobs (in one or more occupations) having requirements which the claimant is able to meet with his or her physical or mental ability and vocational qualifications. Isolated jobs that exist in very limited numbers in relatively few locations outside the region where the claimant lives are not considered "work which exists in the national economy." The Board will not deny the claimant a disability annuity on the basis of the existence of these kinds of jobs. The Board will determine that the claimant is disabled if the work he or she can do does not exist in the national economy. If the work the claimant can do does exist in the national economy, the

Board will determine that the claimant is not disabled.

(c) *Inability to obtain work.* The Board will determine that the claimant is not disabled if he or she has the residual functional capacity and vocational abilities to do work which exists in the national economy but the claimant remains unemployed because of—

- (1) His or her inability to get work;
- (2) Lack of work in his or her local area;
- (3) The hiring practices of employers;
- (4) Technological changes in the industry in which the claimant has worked;
- (5) Cyclical economic conditions;
- (6) No job openings for the claimant;
- (7) The claimant not actually being hired to do work he or she could otherwise do; or
- (8) The claimant not wishing to do a particular type of work.

(d) *Administrative notice of job data.* The following sources are used when the Board determines that unskilled, sedentary, light and medium jobs exist in the national economy:

- (1) *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, published by the Department of Labor.
- (2) *County Business Patterns*, published by the Bureau of the Census.
- (3) *Census Reports*, also published by the Bureau of the Census.
- (4) *Occupational Analyses*, prepared for the Social Security Administration by various State employment agencies.
- (5) *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

(e) *Use of vocational experts and other specialists.* If the issue in determining whether the claimant is disabled is whether his or her work skills can be used in other work and the specific occupations in which they can be used, or there is a similarly complex issue, the Board may use the services of a vocational expert or other specialist. The Board will decide whether to use a vocational expert or other specialist.

§ 220.132 Physical exertion requirements.

To determine the physical exertion requirements of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as “sedentary”, “light”, “medium”, “heavy”, and “very heavy.” These terms have the

same meaning as they have in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, published by the Department of Labor. In making disability determinations the Board uses the following definitions:

(a) *Sedentary work.* Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and the other sedentary criteria are met.

(b) *Light work.* Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls. To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, the claimant must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. If the claimant can do light work, the Board determines that he or she can also do sedentary work, unless there are additional limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time.

(c) *Medium work.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. If the claimant can do medium work, the Board determines that he or she can also do sedentary and light work.

(d) *Heavy work.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. If the claimant can do heavy work, the Board determines that he or she can also do medium, light, and sedentary work.

(e) *Very heavy work.* Very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing 50 pounds or more. If the claimant can