

Railroad Retirement Board

§ 220.131

English, and do at least simple calculations in arithmetic. The Board will also consider information about how much formal or informal education the claimant received from his or her previous work, community projects, hobbies and any other activities which might help him or her to work.

§ 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