

or whether individuals have meaningful accrued benefits under a plan, is determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances. The relevant factors in making this determination include, but are not limited to, the following: the level of current benefit accruals; the comparative rate of accruals under the current benefit formula compared to prior rates of accrual under the plan; the projected accrued benefits under the current benefit formula compared to accrued benefits as of the close of the immediately preceding plan year; the length of time the current benefit formula has been in effect; the number of employees with accrued benefits under the plan; and the length of time the plan has been in effect. A rule for determining whether an offset plan provides meaningful benefits is provided in § 1.401(a)(26)-5(a)(2). A plan does not satisfy this paragraph (c) if it exists primarily to preserve accrued benefits for a small group of employees and thereby functions more as an individual plan for the small group of employees or for the employer.

(d) *Multiemployer plan rule.* A multiemployer plan is deemed to satisfy the prior benefit structure rule in paragraph (c)(1) of this section for a plan year if the multiemployer plan provides meaningful benefits to at least 50 employees for a plan year, or 50 employees have meaningful accrued benefits under the plan. For purposes of this paragraph, all employees benefiting under the multiemployer plan may be considered, whether or not these employees are included in a unit of employees covered pursuant to any collective bargaining agreement.

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63415, Dec. 4, 1991]

§ 1.401(a)(26)-4 Testing former employees.

(a) *Scope.* This section applies to any defined benefit plan that benefits former employees in a plan year within the meaning of § 1.401(a)(26)-5(b) and does not meet one of the exceptions in § 1.401(a)(26)-1(b).

(b) *Minimum participation rule for former employees.* Except as set forth in paragraph (c) of this section, a plan that is subject to this section must benefit at least the lesser of:

(1) 50 former employees of the employer, or

(2) 40 percent of the former employees of the employer.

(c) *Special rule.* A plan satisfies the minimum participation rule in paragraph (b) of this section if the plan benefits at least five former employees, and if either:

(1) More than 95 percent of all former employees with vested accrued benefits under the plan benefit under the plan for the plan year, or

(2) At least 60 percent of the former employees who benefit under the plan for the plan year are nonhighly compensated former employees.

(d) *Excludable former employees—(1) General rule.* Whether a former employee is an excludable former employee for purposes of this section is determined under § 1.401(a)(26)-6(c).

(2) *Exception.* Solely for purposes of paragraph (c) of this section, the rule in § 1.401(a)(26)-6(c)(4) (regarding vested accrued benefits eligible for mandatory distribution) does not apply to any former employee having a vested accrued benefit. Thus, a former employee who has a vested accrued benefit is not an excludable former employee merely because that vested accrued benefit does not exceed the cash-out limit in effect under § 1.411(a)-11(c)(3)(ii).

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63416, Dec. 4, 1991, as amended by T.D. 8794, 63 FR 70338, Dec. 21, 1998; T.D. 8891, 65 FR 44682, July 19, 2000]

§ 1.401(a)(26)-5 Employees who benefit under a plan.

(a) *Employees benefiting under a plan—*

(1) *In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (a)(2) of this section, an employee is treated as benefiting under a plan for a plan year if and only if, for that plan year, the employee would be treated as benefiting under the provisions of § 1.410(b)-3(a), without regard to § 1.410(b)-3(a)(iv).

(2) *Sequential or concurrent benefit offset arrangements—(i) In general.* An employee is treated as accruing a benefit under a plan that includes an offset or reduction of benefits that satisfies either paragraph (a)(2)(ii) or (a)(2)(iii) of this section if either the employee accrues a benefit under the plan for the