

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

year, or the employee would have accrued a benefit if the offset or reduction portion of the benefit formula were disregarded. In addition, an employee is treated as accruing a meaningful benefit for purposes of prior benefit structure testing under § 1.401(a)(26)-3 if the employee would have accrued a meaningful benefit if the offset or reduction portion of the benefit formula were disregarded.

(ii) *Offset by sequential or grandfathered benefits.* An offset or reduction of benefits under a defined benefit plan satisfies this paragraph (a)(2) if the benefit formula provides that an employee will not accrue additional benefits under the current portion of the benefit formula until the employee has accrued, under such portion, a benefit in excess of such employee's benefit under one or more formulas in effect for prior years that are based wholly on prior years of service. The prior benefit may have accrued under the same or a separate plan, may be provided under the same or a separate plan and may relate to service with the same or previous employers. Benefits will not fail to be treated as based wholly on prior years if they are based, directly or indirectly, on compensation earned after such prior years (including compensation earned in the current year), if they are adjusted to reflect increases in the section 415 limitations, or if they are increased to provide an ad hoc cost of living adjustment designed to adjust, in whole or in part, for inflation. Furthermore, benefits do not fail to be treated as based wholly on prior years merely because the benefits (e.g., early retirement benefits) are subject to an age or years-of-service condition and, in applying the condition or conditions, the current and prior years are taken into account.

(iii) *Concurrent benefit offset arrangements—(A) General rule.* An offset or reduction of benefits under a defined benefit plan satisfies the requirements of this paragraph (a)(2)(iii) if the benefit formula provides a benefit that is offset or reduced by contributions or benefits under another plan that is maintained by the same employer and the following additional requirements are met:

(1) The contributions or benefits under a plan that are used to offset or reduce the benefits under the positive portion of the formula being tested accrued under such other plan;

(2) The employees who benefit under the formula being tested also benefit under the other plan on a reasonable and uniform basis; and

(3) The contributions or benefits under the plan that are used to offset or reduce the benefits under the formula being tested are not used to offset or reduce that employee's benefits under any other plan or any other formula.

(B) *Special rules for certain section 414(n) employer-recipients.* The same employer requirement in the concurrent benefit offset rule in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A) of this section is waived for certain section 414(n) employer-recipients. Under this exception, an employer-recipient (within the meaning of sections 414 (n) and (o)) may treat contributions or benefits under a plan maintained by a leasing organization as contributions or benefits accrued under the recipient organization plan provided the following requirements are met: the employer-recipient maintains a plan covering leased employees (which employees are treated as employees of the employer-recipient within the meaning of sections 414(n)(2) and 414(o)(2)); the leased employees are also covered under a plan maintained by the leasing organization; and contributions or benefits under the plan maintained by the employer-recipient are offset or reduced by the contributions or benefits under the leasing organization plan that are attributable to service with the recipient organization. Also, for purposes of the benefiting condition requirement in paragraph (a)(2)(iii)(A)(2) of this section, the employees of the employer-recipient who are not leased from the leasing organization are not required to benefit under the plan of the leasing organization.

(b) *Former employees benefiting under a plan.* A former employee is treated as benefiting for a plan year if and only if the former employee would be treated as benefiting under the rules in § 1.410(b)-3(b).

[T.D. 8375, 56 FR 63416, Dec. 4, 1991]