

§ 701.6

49 CFR Ch. VII (10–1–02 Edition)

the request should include specific information such as dates, title or name, author, recipient, subject matter of the record, file designation or number, or other pertinent details for each record or category of records sought.

(2) *Reformulation of a request.* Amtrak is not obligated to act on a request until the requester provides sufficient information to locate the record. Amtrak may offer assistance in identifying records and reformulating a request where: the description is considered insufficient, the production of voluminous records is required, or a considerable number of work hours would be required that would interfere with the business of the Corporation. The Freedom of Information Office shall notify the requester within ten business days of the type of information that will facilitate the search. The requesting party shall be given an opportunity to supply additional information and may submit a revised request, which will be treated as a new request.

(d) *Payment of fees.* The submission of a FOIA request constitutes an agreement to pay applicable fees accessed up to \$25.00 unless the requesting party specifies a willingness to pay a greater or lesser amount or seeks a fee waiver or reduction in fees.

(1) *Fees in excess of \$25.00.* When Amtrak determines or estimates that applicable fees are likely to exceed \$25.00, the requesting party shall be notified of estimated or actual fees, unless a commitment has been made in advance to pay all fees. If only a portion of the fee can be estimated readily, Amtrak shall advise the requester that the estimated fee may be a portion of the total fee.

(i) In order to protect requesters from large and/or unexpected fees, Amtrak will request a specific commitment when it estimates or determines that fees will exceed \$100.00.

(ii) A request shall not be considered received, and further processing carried out until the requesting party agrees to pay the anticipated total fee. Any such agreement must be memorialized in writing. A notice under this paragraph will offer the requesting party an opportunity to discuss the matter in order to reformulate the request to

meet the requester's needs at a lower cost.

(iii) Amtrak will hold in abeyance for forty-five (45) days requests requiring agreement to pay fees and will thereafter deem the request closed. This action will not prevent the requesting party from refiling the FOIA request with a fee commitment at a subsequent date.

(2) *Fees in excess of \$250.* When Amtrak estimates or determines that allowable charges are likely to exceed \$250, an advance deposit of the entire fee may be required before continuing to process the request.

(e) *Information regarding fee category.* In order to determine the appropriate fee category, a request should indicate whether the information sought is intended for commercial use or whether the requesting party is a member of the staff of an educational or non-commercial scientific institution or a representative of the news media.

(f) *Records concerning other individuals.* If the request is for records concerning another individual, either a written authorization signed by that individual permitting disclosure of those records to the requesting party or proof that the individual is deceased (i.e., a copy of a death certificate or an obituary) will help to expedite processing of the request.

§ 701.6 Release and processing procedures.

(a) *General provisions.* In determining records that are responsive to a request, Amtrak will ordinarily include only records that exist and are in the possession and control of the Corporation as of the date that the search is begun. If any other date is used, the requesting party will be informed of that date.

(b) *Authority to grant or deny requests.* Amtrak's FOIA officer is authorized to grant or deny any request for records.

(c) *Notice of referral.* If Amtrak refers all or any part of the responsibility for responding to a request to another organization, the requesting party will be notified. A referral shall not be considered a denial of access within the meaning of this part. All consultations

and referrals of requests will be handled according to the date that the FOIA request was initially received.

(d) *Creating a record.* There is no obligation on the part of Amtrak to create, compile, or obtain a record to satisfy a FOIA request. The FOIA also does not require that a new computer program be developed to extract the records requested. Amtrak may compile or create a new record, however, when doing so would result in a more useful response to the requesting party or would be less burdensome to Amtrak than providing existing records. The cost of creating or compiling such a record may not be charged to the requester unless the fee for creating the record is equal to or less than the fee that would be charged for providing the existing record.

(e) *Incomplete records.* If the records requested are not complete at the time of a request, Amtrak may, at its discretion, inform the requester that complete nonexempt records will be provided when available without having to submit an additional request.

(f) *Electronic records.* Amtrak is not obligated to process a request for electronic records where creation of a record, programming or a particular format would result in a significant expenditure of resources or interfere with the corporation's operations.

§ 701.7 Timing of responses to requests.

(a) *General.* (1) The time limits of the FOIA will begin only after the requirements for submitting a request as established in § 701.5 have been met, and the request is deemed received by the Freedom of Information Office.

(2) A request for records shall be considered to have been received on the later of the following dates:

(i) The requester has agreed in writing to pay applicable fees in accordance with § 701.5(d), or

(ii) The fees have been waived in accordance with § 701.11(k), or

(iii) Payment in advance has been received from the requester when required in accordance with § 701.11(i).

(3) The time for responding to requests set forth in paragraph (b) of this section may be delayed if:

(i) The request does not sufficiently identify the fee category applicable to the request;

(ii) The request does not state a willingness to pay all fees;

(iii) A request seeking a fee waiver does not address the criteria for fee waivers set forth in § 701.11(k);

(iv) A fee waiver request is denied, and the request does not include an alternative statement indicating that the requesting party is willing to pay all fees.

(b) *Initial determination.* Whenever possible, an initial determination to release or deny a record shall be made within twenty business days after receipt of the request. In "unusual circumstances" as described in paragraph (d) of this section, the time for an initial determination may be extended for ten business days.

(c) *Multitrack processing.* (1) Amtrak may use two or more processing tracks by distinguishing between simple and more complex requests based on the amount of work and/or time needed to process a request or the number of pages involved.

(2) In general, when requests are received, Amtrak's FOIA Office will review and categorize them for tracking purposes. Requests within each track will be processed according to date of receipt.

(3) The FOIA Office may contact a requester when a request does not appear to qualify for fast track processing to provide an opportunity to limit the scope of the request and qualify for a faster track. Such notification shall be at the discretion of the FOIA Office and will depend largely on whether it is believed that a narrowing of the request could place the request on a faster track.

(d) *Unusual circumstances.* (1) The requesting party shall be notified in writing if the time limits for processing a request cannot be met because of unusual circumstances, and it will be necessary to extend the time limits for processing the request. The notification shall include the date by which the request can be expected to be completed. Where the extension is for more than ten business days, the requesting party will be afforded an opportunity to either modify the request so that it