

§ 70.41

professional employee shall be deducted from the total costs of computer processing time.

(d)(1) *Search costs.* When a search for records is performed by a clerical employee, a rate of \$2.50 per quarter hour will be applicable. When a search is performed by professional or supervisory personnel, a rate of \$5.00 per quarter hour will be applicable. If the search for requested records requires transportation of the searcher to the location of the records or transportation of the records to the searcher, all transportation costs in excess of \$5.00 may be added to the search cost. When an existing computer program is employed to locate records responsive to a request, the disclosure officer may charge the actual cost of providing the service.

(2) *Reproduction costs.* The standard copying charge for documents in paper copy is \$.15 per page. When responsive information is provided in a format other than paper copy, such as in the form of computer tapes and discs, the requester may be charged the direct costs of the tape, disc or whatever medium is used to produce the information, as well as any related reproduction costs.

(3) *Review costs.* Costs associated with the review of documents, as defined in § 70.38(c), will be applicable at a rate of \$5.00 per quarter hour. Except as noted below, charges may only be assessed for review at the initial level, i.e. the review undertaken the first time the documents are analyzed to determine the applicability of specific exemptions to the particular record or portion of the record. Thus a requester would not be charged for review at the administrative appeal level with regard to the applicability of an exemption already applied at the initial level. When, however, a record has been withheld pursuant to an exemption which is subsequently determined not to apply and is reviewed again at the appellate level to determine the potential applicability of other exemptions, the costs attendant to such additional review may be assessed.

(4) *Mailing cost.* Where requests for copies are made by mail, no postage charge will be made for transmitting by regular mail a single copy of the re-

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quested record to the requester, or for mailing additional copies where the total postage cost does not exceed \$1. However, where the volume of page copy or method of transmittal requested is such that transmittal charges to the Department are in excess of \$1, the transmittal costs will be added, unless appropriate stamps or stamped envelopes are furnished with the request, or authorization is given for collection of shipping charges on delivery.

(e) *Privacy Act requesters.* Requests from individuals for records about themselves which are contained within agency systems of records shall be treated under the fee provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 which permit the assessment of reproduction costs only, after providing the first copy of a file at no cost.

[54 FR 23144, May 30, 1989; 54 FR 30503, July 20, 1989]

§ 70.41 Reduction or waiver of fees.

This section sets forth conditions under which the applicable charges for records responsive to a request under 5 U.S.C. 552, as set forth in § 70.40, are subject to reduction or waiver by the disclosure officer.

(a) *Statutorily required waiver or reduction in fees.* Documents shall be furnished without charge or at a charge below the fees set forth in § 70.40 if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The subject of the requested records concerns the operations or activities of the United States Government;

(2) The disclosure of the requested records is likely to contribute to an understanding of Government operations or activities;

(3) The disclosure is likely to contribute to a public understanding of such operations or activities;

(4) The contribution to public understanding of government operations and activities will be significant; and

(5) The public's interest in disclosure exceeds the requester's commercial interest in disclosure.

(b) *De minimis costs.* Where the cost of collecting a fee to be assessed to a requester exceeds the amount of the fee which would otherwise be assessed, no

fee need be charged. Under normal circumstances, fees which do not exceed \$5.00 need not be collected.

(c) *Reformulating requests.* When the estimated reproduction costs are likely to exceed \$25.00, the requester may be notified of the estimated amount of fees, unless the requester has indicated in advance its willingness to pay fees as high as those anticipated. Such notice may invite the requester to reformulate the request to satisfy his or her needs at a lower cost.

§ 70.42 Ancillary considerations.

(a) *Costs assessed when no records are disclosed.* The costs of searching for and, in the case of a commercial use request, reviewing records may be assessed even where ultimately no documents are disclosed or located.

(b) *Aggregating requests.* A requester may not file multiple requests, each seeking portions of a document or documents in order to avoid the payment of fees. When there is reason to believe that a requester or a group of requesters acting in concert, is attempting to break a request down into a series of requests for the purpose of evading the assessment of fees, any such requests may be aggregated and the requesters charged as if there were only a single request.

(c) *Advance payments.* An advance payment before work is commenced or continued on a request, may not be required unless:

(1) It is estimated or determined that the allowable charge that a requester may be required to pay are likely to exceed \$250. When a determination is made that the allowable charges are likely to exceed \$250, the requester shall be notified of the likely cost and be required to provide satisfactory assurance of full payment where the requester has a history of prompt payment of FOIA fees, or be required to tender advance payment of at least 50% of the full estimated charges in the case of requesters with no history of payment; or

(2) A requester has previously failed to pay a fee charged in a timely fashion (i.e., within 30 days of the date of the billing) in which case the requester may be required:

(i) To pay the full amount owed plus any applicable interest as provided in § 70.41(e), when an outstanding balance is due and owing, and

(ii) To make an advance payment of the full amount of the estimated fee before the component begins to process a new request.

(3) In any case, the payment of outstanding fees may be required before responsive materials are actually disclosed to a requester.

(d) *Time limits to respond extended when advance payments requested.* When an advance payment of fees in accordance with paragraph (c) of this section has been requested the administrative time limits prescribed in subsection (a)(6) of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6), will only begin to run after such advance payment has been received by the agency.

(e) *Interest charges.* Interest charges on an unpaid bill may be assessed starting on the 31st day following the day on which the billing was sent. Interest shall be at the rate prescribed in section 3717 of title 31 U.S.C. and shall accrue from the date of the billing.

(f) *Authentication of copies—(1) Fees.* The Freedom of Information Act does not require certification or attestation under seal of copies of records furnished in accordance with its provisions. Pursuant to provisions of the general user-charger statute, 31 U.S.C. 9701 and subchapter II of title 29 U.S.C., the following charges may be made where such services are requested:

(i) For certification of true copies, each \$1.

(ii) For attestation under the seal of the Department, each \$3.

(2) *Authority and form for attestation under seal.* Authority is hereby given to any officer or officers of the Department of Labor designated as authentication officer or officers of the Department to sign and issue attestations under the seal of the Department of Labor.

(g) *Transcripts.* All transcripts shall be made available in accordance with the terms set forth in § 70.40.