

§ 900.59

the parties at the conference or as a result of the conference. If the circumstances are such that a conference is impracticable, the judge may request the parties to correspond with him for the purpose of accomplishing any of the objects set forth in this section. The judge shall forward copies of letters and documents to the parties as the circumstances require. Correspondence in such negotiations shall not be a part of the record, but the judge shall submit a written summary for the record if any action is taken.

§ 900.59 Motions and requests.

(a) *General.* (1) All motions and requests shall be filed with the hearing clerk, except that those made during the course of an oral hearing may be filed with the judge or may be stated orally and made a part of the transcript.

(2) The judge is authorized to rule upon all motions and requests filed or made prior to the transmittal by the hearing clerk to the Secretary of the record as provided in this subpart. The Secretary shall rule upon all motions and requests filed after that time.

(b) *Certification of motions.* The submission or certification of any motion, request, objection, or other question to the Secretary, as provided in this subpart, shall be in the discretion of the judge.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973]

§ 900.60 Oral hearings before judge.

(a) *Time and place.* The judge shall set a time and place for hearing and shall file with the hearing clerk a notice stating the time and place of hearing. If any change in the time or place of hearing becomes necessary, it shall be made by the judge, who, in such event, shall file with the hearing clerk a notice of the change. Such notice shall be served upon the parties, unless it is made during the course of an oral hearing and made a part of the transcript.

(b) *Appearances—(1) Representation.* In any proceeding under the act, the parties may appear in person or by counsel or other representative. The Department, if represented by counsel, shall be represented by an attorney assigned by the General Counsel of the Depart-

7 CFR Ch. IX (1-1-03 Edition)

ment, and such attorney shall present or supervise the presentation of the position of the Department.

(2) *Debarment of counsel or representative.* Whenever, while a proceeding is pending before him, the judge finds that a person acting as counsel or representative for any party to the proceeding is guilty of unethical or unprofessional conduct, the judge may order that such person be precluded from further acting as counsel or representative in such proceeding. An appeal to the Secretary may be taken from any such order, but the proceeding shall not be delayed or suspended pending disposition of the appeal: *Provided*, That the judge may suspend the proceeding for a reasonable time for the purpose of enabling the client to obtain other counsel or representative. In case the judge has issued an order precluding a person from further acting as counsel or representative in the proceeding, the judge, within a reasonable time thereafter, shall submit to the Secretary a report of the facts and circumstances surrounding the issuance of the order and shall recommend what action the Secretary should take respecting the appearance of such person as counsel or representative in other proceedings before the Secretary. Thereafter, the Secretary may, after notice and an opportunity for hearing, issue such order respecting the appearance of such person as counsel or representative in proceedings before the Secretary as the Secretary finds to be appropriate.

(3) *Failure to appear.* If the petitioner, after being duly notified, fails to appear at the hearing, he shall be deemed to have authorized the dismissal of the proceeding, without further procedure, and with or without prejudice as the judge may determine. In the event that the petitioner appears at the hearing and no representative of the Department appears, the judge shall proceed ex parte to hear the evidence of the petitioner. *Provided*, That failure on the part of such representative of the Department to appear at a hearing shall not be deemed to be waiver of the Department's right to file suggested findings of fact, conclusions and order; to

be served with a copy of the judge's initial decision and to appeal to the Secretary with respect thereto.

(c) *Order of proceeding.* Except as may be determined otherwise by the judge, the petitioner shall proceed first at the hearing.

(d) *Evidence—(1) In general.* The hearing shall be publicly conducted, and the testimony given at the hearing shall be reported verbatim.

(i) The testimony of witnesses at a hearing shall be upon oath or affirmation and subject to cross-examination.

(ii) Any witness may, in the discretion of the judge, be examined separately and apart from all other witnesses except those who may be parties to the proceeding.

(iii) The judge shall exclude, insofar as practicable, evidence which is immaterial, irrelevant, or unduly repetitious, or which is not of the sort upon which responsible persons are accustomed to rely.

(2) *Objections.* If a party objects to the admission or rejection of any evidence or to the limitation of the scope of any examination or cross-examination, or any other ruling of the judge, he shall state briefly the grounds of such objection, whereupon an automatic exception will follow which may be pursued in an appeal pursuant to § 900.65 by the party adversely affected by the judge's ruling.

(3) *Depositions.* The deposition of any witness shall be admitted, in the manner hereinafter provided in and subject to the provisions of § 900.61.

(4) *Affidavits.* Except as is otherwise provided in this subpart, affidavits may be admitted only if the evidence is otherwise admissible and the parties agree (which may be determined by their failure to make timely objections) that affidavits may be used.

(5) *Proof and authentication of official records or documents.* An official record or document, when admissible for any purpose, shall be admissible in evidence without the production of the person who made or prepared the same. Such record or document shall, in the discretion of the judge, be evidenced by an official publication thereof or by a copy attested by the person having legal custody thereof and accompanied

by a certificate that such person has the custody.

(6) *Exhibits.* All written statements, charts, tabulations, or similar data offered in evidence at the hearing shall, after identification by the proponent and upon a satisfactory showing of the admissibility of the contents thereof, be numbered as exhibits and received in evidence and made a part of the record. Except where the judge finds that the furnishing of copies is impracticable, a copy of each exhibit, in addition to the original, shall be filed with the judge for the use of each other party to the proceeding. The judge shall advise the parties as to the exact number of copies which will be required to be filed and shall make and have noted on the record the proper distribution of the copies. If the testimony of a witness refers to a statute, or to a report, document, or transcript, the judge, after inquiry relating to the identification of such statute, report, document, or transcript, shall determine whether the same shall be produced at the hearing and physically be made a part of the evidence as an exhibit, or whether it shall be incorporated into the evidence by reference. If relevant and material matter offered in evidence is embraced in a report, document, or transcript containing immaterial or irrelevant matter, such immaterial or irrelevant matter shall be excluded and shall be segregated insofar as practicable, subject to the direction of the judge.

(7) *Official notice.* Official notice will be taken of such matters as are judicially noticed by the courts of the United States and of any other matter of technical, scientific, or commercial fact of established character: *Provided,* That the parties shall be given adequate notice, at the hearing or by reference in the judge's report or the tentative order or otherwise, of matters so noticed, and (except where official notice is taken, for the first time in the proceeding, in the final order) shall be given adequate opportunity to show that such facts are erroneously noticed.

(8) *Offer of proof.* Whenever evidence is excluded from the record, the party offering such evidence may make an offer of proof, which shall be included

in the transcript. The offer of proof shall consist of a brief statement describing the evidence to be offered. If the evidence consists of a brief oral statement or of an exhibit, it shall be inserted into the transcript in toto. In such event, it shall be considered a part of the transcript if the Secretary decides that the judge's ruling in excluding the evidence was erroneous. The judge shall not allow the insertion of such evidence in toto if the taking of such evidence will consume a considerable length of time at the hearing. In the latter event, if on appeal the Secretary decides that the judge erred in excluding the evidence, and that such error was substantial, the hearing shall be reopened to permit the taking of such evidence.

(e) *Transcript.* Transcripts of hearings shall be made available to any person at actual cost of duplication.

[25 FR 5907, June 28, 1960, as amended at 38 FR 29798, Oct. 29, 1973; 67 FR 10829, Mar. 11, 2002]

§ 900.61 Depositions.

(a) *Procedure in lieu of deposition.* Before any party may have testimony taken by deposition, said party shall, if practicable, submit to the other party an affidavit which shall set forth the facts to which the witness would testify, if the deposition should be taken. If, after examination of such affidavit, the other party agrees, or (within 10 days after submission of the affidavit) fails to object, that the affidavit may be used in lieu of the deposition, the judge shall admit the affidavit in evidence and shall not order the deposition to be taken.

(b) *Application for taking deposition.* Upon the application of a party to the proceeding, the judge may, at any time after the filing of the moving paper, order, under the facsimile signature of the Secretary, the taking of testimony by deposition. The application shall be in writing and shall be filed with the hearing clerk and shall set forth: (1) The name and address of the proposed deponent; (2) the name and address of the person (referred to hereinafter in this section as the *judge*), qualified under the rules in this part to take depositions, before whom the proposed examination is to be made; (3) the pro-

posed time and place of the examination, which shall be at least 15 days after the date of the mailing of the application; and (4) the reasons why such deposition should be taken.

(c) *Judge's order for taking deposition.* If, after the examination of the application, the judge is of the opinion that the deposition should be taken, he shall order its taking. The order shall be filed with the hearing clerk and shall be served upon the parties and shall state: (1) The time and place of the examination (which shall not be less than 10 days after the filing of the order); (2) the name of the judge before whom the examination is to be made; (3) the name of the deponent. The judge and the time and place need not be the same as those suggested in the application.

(d) *Qualifications of judge.* The deposition shall be taken before the judge, or before a judge authorized by the law of the United States or by the law of the place of the examination to administer oaths, or before a judge authorized by the Secretary to administer oaths.

(e) *Procedure on examination.* (1) The deponent shall be examined under oath or affirmation and shall be subject to cross-examination. The testimony of the deponent shall be recorded by the judge or by some person under his direction and in his presence. In lieu of oral examination, parties may transmit written interrogatories to the judge prior to the examination and the judge shall propound such interrogatories to the deponent.

(2) The applicant must arrange for the examination of the witness either by oral examination or by written interrogatories. If it is found by the judge, upon the protest of a party to the proceeding, that such party has his residence and his place of business more than 100 miles from the place of the examination and that it would constitute an undue hardship upon such party to be represented at the examination, the applicant will be required to conduct the examination by means of interrogatories. When the examination is conducted by means of interrogatories, copies of the interrogatories shall be served upon the other parties to the proceeding at least five days