

the depreciation rate for a classified or composite account.

§ 1.167(a)-8 Retirements.

(a) *Gains and losses on retirements.* For the purposes of this section the term "retirement" means the permanent withdrawal of depreciable property from use in the trade or business or in the production of income. The withdrawal may be made in one of several ways. For example, the withdrawal may be made by selling or exchanging the asset, or by actual abandonment. In addition, the asset may be withdrawn from such productive use without disposition as, for example, by being placed in a supplies or scrap account. The tax consequences of a retirement depend upon the form of the transaction, the reason therefor, the timing of the retirement, the estimated useful life used in computing depreciation, and whether the asset is accounted for in a separate or multiple asset account. Upon the retirement of assets, the rules in this section apply in determining whether gain or loss will be recognized, the amount of such gain or loss, and the basis for determining gain or loss:

(1) Where an asset is retired by sale at arm's length, recognition of gain or loss will be subject to the provisions of sections 1002, 1231, and other applicable provisions of law.

(2) Where an asset is retired by exchange, the recognition of gain or loss will be subject to the provisions of sections 1002, 1031, 1231, and other applicable provisions of law.

(3) Where an asset is permanently retired from use in the trade or business or in the production of income but is not disposed of by the taxpayer or physically abandoned (as, for example, when the asset is transferred to a supplies or scrap account), gain will not be recognized. In such a case loss will be recognized measured by the excess of the adjusted basis of the asset at the time of retirement over the estimated salvage value or over the fair market value at the time of such retirement if greater, but only if—

(i) The retirement is an abnormal retirement, or

(ii) The retirement is a normal retirement from a single asset account

(but see paragraph (d) of this section for special rule for item accounts), or

(iii) The retirement is a normal retirement from a multiple asset account in which the depreciation rate was based on the maximum expected life of the longest lived asset contained in the account.

(4) Where an asset is retired by actual physical abandonment (as, for example, in the case of a building condemned as unfit for further occupancy or other use), loss will be recognized measured by the amount of the adjusted basis of the asset abandoned at the time of such abandonment. In order to qualify for the recognition of loss from physical abandonment, the intent of the taxpayer must be irrevocably to discard the asset so that it will neither be used again by him nor retrieved by him for sale, exchange, or other disposition.

Experience with assets which have attained an exceptional or unusual age shall, with respect to similar assets, be disregarded in determining the maximum expected useful life of the longest lived asset in a multiple asset account. For example, if a manufacturer establishes a proper multiple asset account for 50 assets which are expected to have an average life of 30 years but which will remain useful to him for varying periods between 20 and 40 years, the maximum expected useful life will be 40 years, even though an occasional asset of this kind may last 60 years.

(b) *Definition of normal and abnormal retirements.* For the purpose of this section the determination of whether a retirement is normal or abnormal shall be made in the light of all the facts and circumstances. In general, a retirement shall be considered a normal retirement unless the taxpayer can show that the withdrawal of the asset was due to a cause not contemplated in setting the applicable depreciation rate. For example, a retirement is considered normal if made within the range of years taken into consideration in fixing the depreciation rate and if the asset has reached a condition at which, in the normal course of events, the taxpayer customarily retires similar assets from use in his business. On the

other hand, a retirement may be abnormal if the asset is withdrawn at an earlier time or under other circumstances, as, for example, when the asset has been damaged by casualty or has lost its usefulness suddenly as the result of extraordinary obsolescence.

(c) *Basis of assets retired.* The basis of an asset at the time of retirement for computing gain or loss shall be its adjusted basis for determining gain or loss upon a sale or other disposition as determined in accordance with the provisions of section 1011 and the following rules:

(1) In the case of a normal retirement of an asset from a multiple asset account where the depreciation rate is based on average expected useful life, the term "adjusted basis" means the salvage value estimated in determining the depreciation deduction in accordance with the provisions in paragraph (c) of § 1.167(a)-1.

(2) In the case of a normal retirement of an asset from a multiple asset account on which the depreciation rate was based on the maximum expected life of the longest lived asset in the account, the adjustment for depreciation allowed or allowable shall be made at the rate which would have been proper if the asset had been depreciated in a single asset account (under the method of depreciation used for the multiple asset account) using a rate based upon the maximum expected useful life of that asset, and

(3) In the case of an abnormal retirement from a multiple asset account the adjustment for depreciation allowed or allowable shall be made at the rate which would have been proper had the asset been depreciated in a single asset account (under the method of depreciation used for the multiple asset account) and using a rate based upon either the average expected useful life or the maximum expected useful life of the asset, depending upon the method of determining the rate of depreciation used in connection with the multiple asset account.

(d) *Special rule for item accounts.* (1) As indicated in paragraph (a)(3)(ii) and (iii) of this section, a loss is recognized upon the normal retirement of an asset from a single asset account but a loss on the normal retirement of an asset in

a multiple asset account is not allowable where the depreciation rate is based upon the average useful life of the assets in the account. Where a taxpayer with more than one depreciable asset chooses to set up a separate account for each such asset and the depreciation rate is based on the average useful life of such assets (so that he uses the same life for each account), the question arises whether his depreciation deductions in substance are the equivalent of those which would result from the use of multiple asset accounts and, therefore, he should be subject to the rules governing losses on retirements of assets from multiple asset accounts. Where a taxpayer has only a few depreciable assets which he chooses to account for in single asset accounts, particularly where such assets cover a relatively narrow range of lives, it cannot be said in the usual case that the allowance of losses on retirements from such accounts clearly will distort income. This results from the fact that where a taxpayer has only a few depreciable assets it is usually not possible clearly to determine that the depreciation rate is based upon the average useful life of such assets. Accordingly, it cannot be said that the taxpayer is in effect clearly operating with a multiple asset account using an average life rate so that losses should not be allowed on normal retirements. Therefore, losses normally will be allowed upon retirement of assets from single asset accounts where the taxpayer has only a few depreciable assets. On the other hand, when a taxpayer who has only a few depreciable assets chooses to account for them in single asset accounts, using for each account a depreciation rate based on the average useful life of such assets, and the assets cover a wide range of lives, the likelihood that income will be distorted is greater than where the group of assets covers a relatively narrow range of lives. In those cases where the allowance of losses would distort income, the rules with respect to the allowance of losses on normal retirement shall be applied to such assets in the same manner as though the assets had been accounted for in multiple asset accounts using a rate based upon average expected useful life.

(2) Where a taxpayer has a large number of depreciable assets and depreciation is based on the average useful life of such assets, then, whether such assets are similar or dissimilar and regardless of whether they are accounted for in individual asset accounts or multiple asset accounts the allowance of losses on the normal retirement of such assets would distort income. Such distortion would result from the fact that the use of average useful life (and, accordingly, average rate) assumes that while some assets normally will be retired before the expiration of the average life, others normally will be retired after expiration of the average life. Accordingly, if instead of accounting for a large number of similar or dissimilar depreciable assets in multiple asset accounts, the taxpayer chooses to account separately for such assets, using a rate based upon the average life of such assets, the rules with respect to the allowances of losses on normal retirements will be applied to such assets in the same manner as though the assets were accounted for in multiple asset accounts using a rate based upon average expected useful life.

(3) Where a taxpayer who does not have a large number of depreciable assets (and who therefore is not subject to subparagraph (2) of this paragraph) chooses to set up a separate account for each such asset, and has sought to compute an average life for such assets on which to base his depreciation deductions (so that he uses the same life for each account), the allowance of losses on normal retirements from such accounts may in some situations substantially distort income. Such distortion would result from the fact that the use of average useful life (and, accordingly, average rate) assumes that while some assets normally will be retired before expiration of the average life, others normally will be retired after expiration of the average life. Accordingly, where a taxpayer chooses to account separately for such assets instead of accounting for them in multiple asset accounts, and the result is to substantially distort his income, the rules with respect to the allowance of losses on normal retirements shall be applied to such assets in the same man-

ner as though the assets had been accounted for in multiple asset accounts using a rate based upon average expected useful life.

(4) Whenever a taxpayer is treated under this paragraph as though his assets were accounted for in a multiple asset account using an average life rate, and, therefore, he is denied a loss on retirements, the unrecovered cost less salvage of each asset which was accounted for separately may be amortized in accordance with the regulation stated in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section.

(e) *Accounting treatment of asset retirements.* (1) In the case of a normal retirement where under the foregoing rules no loss is recognized and where the asset is retired without disposition or abandonment, (i) if the asset was contained in a multiple asset account, the full cost of such asset, reduced by estimated salvage, shall be charged to the depreciation reserve, or (ii) if the asset was accounted for separately, the unrecovered cost or other basis, less salvage, of the asset may be amortized through annual deductions from gross income in amounts equal to the unrecovered cost or other basis of such asset, divided by the average expected useful life (not the remaining useful life) applicable to the asset at the time of retirement. For example, if an asset is retired after six years of use and at the time of retirement depreciation was being claimed on the basis of an average expected useful life of ten years, the unrecovered cost or other basis less salvage would be amortized through equal annual deductions over a period of ten years from the time of retirement.

(2) Where multiple asset accounts are used and acquisitions and retirements are numerous, if a taxpayer, in order to avoid unnecessarily detailed accounting for individual retirements, consistently follows the practice of charging the reserve with the full cost or other basis of assets retired and of crediting it with all receipts from salvage, the practice may be continued so long as, in the opinion of the Commissioner, it clearly reflects income. Conversely, where the taxpayer customarily follows a practice of reporting all receipts

from salvage as ordinary taxable income such practice may be continued so long as, in the opinion of the Commissioner, it clearly reflects income.

(f) *Cross reference.* For special rules in connection with the retirement of the last assets of a given year's acquisitions under the declining balance method, see example (2) in paragraph (b) of § 1.167 (b)-2.

§ 1.167(a)-9 Obsolescence.

The depreciation allowance includes an allowance for normal obsolescence which should be taken into account to the extent that the expected useful life of property will be shortened by reason thereof. Obsolescence may render an asset economically useless to the taxpayer regardless of its physical condition. Obsolescence is attributable to many causes, including technological improvements and reasonably foreseeable economic changes. Among these causes are normal progress of the arts and sciences, supersession or inadequacy brought about by developments in the industry, products, methods, markets, sources of supply, and other like changes, and legislative or regulatory action. In any case in which the taxpayer shows that the estimated useful life previously used should be shortened by reason of obsolescence greater than had been assumed in computing such estimated useful life, a change to a new and shorter estimated useful life computed in accordance with such showing will be permitted. No such change will be permitted merely because in the unsupported opinion of the taxpayer the property may become obsolete. For rules governing the allowance of a loss when the usefulness of depreciable property is suddenly terminated, see § 1.167(a)-8. If the estimated useful life and the depreciation rates have been the subject of a previous agreement, see section 167(d) and § 1.167(d)-1.

§ 1.167(a)-10 When depreciation deduction is allowable.

(a) A taxpayer should deduct the proper depreciation allowance each year and may not increase his depreciation allowances in later years by reason of his failure to deduct any depreciation allowance or of his action in

deducting an allowance plainly inadequate under the known facts in prior years. The inadequacy of the depreciation allowance for property in prior years shall be determined on the basis of the allowable method of depreciation used by the taxpayer for such property or under the straight line method if no allowance has ever been claimed for such property. The preceding sentence shall not be construed as precluding application of any method provided in section 167(b) if taxpayer's failure to claim any allowance for depreciation was due solely to erroneously treating as a deductible expense an item properly chargeable to capital account. For rules relating to adjustments to basis, see section 1016 and the regulations thereunder.

(b) The period for depreciation of an asset shall begin when the asset is placed in service and shall end when the asset is retired from service. A proportionate part of one year's depreciation is allowable for that part of the first and last year during which the asset was in service. However, in the case of a multiple asset account, the amount of depreciation may be determined by using what is commonly described as an "averaging convention", that is, by using an assumed timing of additions and retirements. For example, it might be assumed that all additions and retirements to the asset account occur uniformly throughout the taxable year, in which case depreciation is computed on the average of the beginning and ending balances of the asset account for the taxable year. See example (3) under paragraph (b) of § 1.167(b)-1. Among still other averaging conventions which may be used is the one under which it is assumed that all additions and retirements during the first half of a given year were made on the first day of that year and that all additions and retirements during the second half of the year were made on the first day of the following year. Thus, a full year's depreciation would be taken on additions in the first half of the year and no depreciation would be taken on additions in the second half. Moreover, under this convention, no depreciation would be taken on retirements in the first half of the year and a full year's depreciation would be