

§ 7.24

(i) Except as may be required to coordinate with the Department of Justice under 11 CFR 7.23(b)(2)(iii) any investigation conducted under this section shall be kept confidential until such time as the Commission has determined whether there is reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred.

(ii) The Ethics Officer shall notify the Director of the Office of Government Ethics and the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice of the Commission's finding that the complaint has merit. The notification shall contain a copy of the complaint, any materials submitted by the former employee, the Ethics Officer's report, and the certification of the Commission's action.

(iii) The Commission will coordinate any investigation or administrative action with the Department of Justice to avoid prejudicing criminal proceedings, unless the Department of Justice notifies the Commission that it does not intend to initiate criminal proceedings.

(3) If the Commission finds the complaint to be unfounded, no investigation will be conducted and both the complainant and the former employee will be notified by the Ethics Officer of the Commission's finding.

§ 7.24 Conduct of preliminary investigation.

(a) *Ethics Officer's responsibility.* Upon a finding under 11 CFR 7.23(b)(2) that a complaint appears to be substantiated, the Ethics Officer shall conduct an investigation into the allegations of the complaint.

(b) *Opportunity to respond.* The former employee will be sent a copy of the Ethics Officer's report and will be given an opportunity to respond in writing and under oath to the allegations made in the complaint and the findings made in the report. The former employee may provide any written legal or factual materials he or she believes demonstrate that no violation has occurred. Such response must be received by the Commission within 20 days after the former employee's receipt of the Ethics Officer's report, unless an extension is authorized in writing by the Ethics Officer.

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(c) *Representation by counsel.* The former employee may be represented by counsel during the investigation. Such counsel shall notify the Ethics Officer in writing that he or she is representing the former employee. Thereafter, all communications between the Commission staff and the former employee relating to the investigation shall be made to the former employee's counsel.

(d) *Report to the Commission.* Upon completion of the investigation, the Ethics Officer shall prepare a report to the Commission, including any materials provided by the former employee. The report shall recommend whether there is reasonable cause to believe the respondent has violated 18 U.S.C. 207 (a), (b), or (c).

§ 7.25 Initiation of administrative disciplinary proceeding.

(a) *Commission review of report.* The Commission shall review the Ethics Officer's investigative report in Executive Session.

(b) *Reasonable cause to believe finding.* If the Commission, by an affirmative vote of four members, determines there is reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred, it shall initiate an administrative disciplinary proceeding by providing the former employee with the notice defined in 11 CFR 7.26.

(c) *No reasonable cause to believe finding.* If the Commission determines that there is no reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred, it will close its file on the matter and take no further action. The Commission shall notify the Director of the Office of Government Ethics, the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice, the complainant, and the former employee of its determination. Included in this notification will be a statement of reasons for the Commission's determination.

§ 7.26 Notice to former employee.

(a) *Notice requirement.* After a reasonable cause to believe finding the Ethics Officer shall provide the former Commission employee with adequate notice of an intention to institute a disciplinary proceeding and an opportunity to request a hearing.

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(b) *Contents.* The notice required under this section shall contain:

(1) A statement of the allegations (and the basis thereof);

(2) Notification of the right to request a hearing;

(3) An explanation of the method by which a hearing may be requested as set forth at 11 CFR 7.26(c); and

(4) A copy of the post-employment regulations.

(c) *Request for hearing.* (1) A former employee who has received a notice under this section must notify the Commission with ten days after receipt of such notice by certified mail of his or her desire for a hearing. The request for a hearing should include the following information:

(i) The former employee's daytime telephone number;

(ii) The name, address, and telephone number of the former employee's counsel, if he or she intends to be represented by counsel; and

(iii) At least three dates and times at which the former employee will be available for a hearing.

(2) If a written request from the former employee is not received by the Ethics Officer within the stated time period, the right to a hearing shall be waived and the examiner (See 11 CFR 7.27) shall consider the evidence and make a decision.

§ 7.27 Hearing examiner designation and qualifications.

(a) *Designation.* If the Commission decides by an affirmative vote of four of its members to hold a hearing, the Ethics Officer shall designate an individual to serve as examiner at the administrative disciplinary hearing. In the absence of a hearing, the Ethics Officer shall designate an examiner to consider the written evidence and make a decision. (See 11 CFR 7.26(b)(2)). The individual designated as examiner shall have the qualifications set forth in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) *Qualifications.* (1) An examiner shall be impartial. No individual who has participated in any manner in the decision to initiate the proceeding may serve as an examiner in those proceedings. Therefore, the following persons may not be designated as an examiner:

(i) A Commissioner,

(ii) The Ethics Officer, or

(iii) Any Commission employee who has participated in the preliminary investigation of the complaint.

(2) The examiner shall be an attorney at the Assistant General Counsel level or higher.

§ 7.28 Hearing date.

(a) *Setting of date by examiner.* The examiner shall set the hearing at a reasonable time, date, and place.

(b) *Considerations.* Whenever practicable, the examiner shall choose a time and date from the list submitted by the former employee in the request for a hearing. In setting a hearing date, the examiner shall give due regard to the former employee's need for:

(1) Adequate time to prepare a defense properly, and

(2) An expeditious resolution of allegations that may be damaging to his or her reputation.

§ 7.29 Hearing rights of former employee.

A hearing conducted under these procedures shall afford the former employee the following rights:

(a) To represent oneself or to be represented by counsel,

(b) To introduce and examine witnesses and to submit physical evidence,

(c) To confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses,

(d) To present oral argument, and

(e) To request a transcript of the recording of proceedings. The requester will be charged according to the fee schedule set out at 11 CFR 5.6.

§ 7.30 Hearing procedures.

(a) *Witness lists.* (1) No later than 10 days prior to the hearing date, the Ethics Officer will provide the former employee with a list of the witnesses the Commission intends to introduce. The list shall include the name and position of each witness and the aspect of the allegation upon which the witness is expected to testify. If no witnesses are to be called, the former employee shall be so notified.

(2) No later than 5 days prior to the hearing date, the former employee shall provide the Ethics Officer with a list of witnesses he or she intends to