

General Accounting Office

§81.6

Chief Quality Officer, U.S. General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, NW., Washington, DC 20548. Requests may also be made via a link from GAO's Internet Home page at <http://www.gao.gov>. Requests also may be emailed to recordsrequest@gao.gov. The Chief Quality Officer will either acknowledge or honor the request within 20 days of receipt.

(b) The Chief Quality Officer will honor requests for expedited processing before all other requests in cases in which the person requesting the records demonstrates a compelling need. A demonstration of compelling need shall be made by a statement certified by the requester to be true and correct to the best of the requester's knowledge and belief.

(c) In the event of an objection or doubt as to the propriety of providing the requester with a copy of the record sought, every effort will be made to resolve such problems as quickly as possible, including consultation with appropriate GAO elements. If it is determined that the record should be withheld, the Chief Quality Officer shall inform the requester in writing that the request has been denied, shall identify the material withheld, and shall explain the basis for the denial.

(d) A person whose request is denied in whole or part may administratively appeal the denial within 60 days after the date of the denial by submitting a letter to the Comptroller General of the United States at the address listed in paragraph (a) of this section, explaining why the denial of the request was unwarranted.

§81.5 Records originating outside GAO, or records involving work in progress.

(a) It is the policy of GAO not to provide records from its files that originate in another agency or nonfederal organization to persons who may not be entitled to obtain the records from the originator. In such instances, requesters will be referred to the person or organization that originated the records.

(b) In order to avoid disruption of work in progress, and in the interests of fairness to those who might be adversely affected by the release of infor-

mation which has not been fully reviewed to assure its accuracy and completeness, it is the policy of GAO not to provide records which are part of ongoing reviews or other current projects. In response to such requests, GAO will inform the requester of the estimated completion date of the review or project so that the requester may then ask for the records. At that time, the records may be released unless exempt from disclosure under §81.6.

§81.6 Records which may be exempt from disclosure.

The public disclosure of GAO records contemplated by this part does not apply to records, or parts thereof, within any of the categories listed below. Unless precluded by law, the Chief Quality Officer may nevertheless release records within these categories.

(a) Congressional correspondence and other records relating to work performed in response to a congressional request (unless authorized by the congressional requester), and congressional contact memoranda.

(b) Records specifically required by an Executive Order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. An example of this category is a record classified under Executive Order 12958, Classified National Security Information.

(c) Records related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency. This category includes, in addition to internal matters of personnel administration, internal rules and practices which cannot be disclosed without prejudice to the effective performance of an agency function. Examples within the purview of this exemption are guidelines and procedures for auditors, investigators, or examiners, and records concerning an agency's security practices or procedures.

(d) Records specifically exempted from disclosure by statute provided that such statute:

(1) Requires that the matters be withheld from the public in such a manner as to leave no discretion on the issue, or

(2) Establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld.

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(e) Records containing trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person that are privileged or confidential. This exemption may include, but is not limited to, business sales statistics, inventories, customer lists, scientific or manufacturing processes or development information.

(f) Personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which could constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. This exemption excludes from disclosure all personnel and medical files, and all private or personal information contained in other files, which, if disclosed to the public, would amount to a clearly unwarranted invasion of the privacy of any person. An example of such other files within the exemption would be files compiled to evaluate candidates for security clearance.

(g) Records and information compiled for law enforcement purposes.

(h) Records having information contained in or related to examination, operation, or condition reports prepared by, on behalf of, or for the use of an agency responsible for the regulation or supervision of financial institutions.

(i) Records containing geological and geophysical information and data (including maps) concerning wells.

(j) Inter-agency or intra-agency memoranda, letters, or other materials that are part of the deliberative process. For example, this exemption includes internal communications such as GAO or other agency draft reports, and those portions of internal drafts, memoranda and workpapers containing opinions, recommendations, advice, or evaluative remarks of GAO employees. This exemption seeks to avoid the inhibiting of internal communications, and the premature disclosure of documents which would be detrimental to an agency decision making.

(k) Records in addition to those described in paragraph (j) of this section containing information customarily subject to protection as privileged in a court or other proceedings, such as information protected by the doctor-patient, attorney-work product, or lawyer-client privilege.

(l) Records GAO has obligated itself not to disclose, including but not lim-

ited to, records for which GAO officials have made a pledge of confidentiality, and records the release of which would adversely impact significant property interests or negatively affect public safety.

(m) Unsolicited records containing information submitted by any person to GAO in confidence. An example of records covered by this exemption would be information obtained by the GAO Office of General Counsel (GAO FraudNET).

§ 81.7 Fees and charges.

(a) No fee or charge will be made for:

(1) Records provided under this part when the direct costs involve less than one hour of search time and 50 pages of photocopying.

(2) Staff-hours spent in resolving any legal or policy questions pertaining to the request.

(3) Copies of records, including those certified as true copies, furnished for official use to a federal government officer or employee.

(4) Copies of pertinent records furnished to a party having a direct and immediate interest in a matter pending before GAO, when necessary or desirable to the performance of a GAO function.

(b) The fees and charges described below will be assessed for the direct costs of search, review, and reproduction of records available to the public under this part.

(1) The cost for reproduction per page shall be 20 cents.

(2) The cost for a certification of authenticity shall be \$10 for each certificate.

(3) Manual search and review for records by office personnel will be assessed at \$12, \$25, or \$45 per hour, depending on the rate of pay of the individual actually conducting the search or review, and the complexity of the search.

(4) Other direct costs related to the request may be charged for such items as computer searches.

(5) Except as noted immediately below, requesters generally will be charged only for document duplication. However, there may be times when a search charge will be added, for example, if records are not described with