

(c) *Deferral to outcome of other proceedings.* A determination to defer to the outcome of other proceedings initiated by a complainant must necessarily be made on a case-to-case basis, after careful scrutiny of all available information. Before deferring to the results of other proceedings, it must be clear that those proceedings dealt adequately with all factual issues, that the proceedings were fair, regular, and free of procedural infirmities, and that the outcome of the proceedings was not repugnant to the purpose and policy of the Act. In this regard, if such other actions initiated by a complainant are dismissed without adjudicatory hearing thereof, such dismissal will not ordinarily be regarded as determinative of the section 11(c) complaint.

SOME SPECIFIC SUBJECTS

§ 1977.22 Employee refusal to comply with safety rules.

Employees who refuse to comply with occupational safety and health standards or valid safety rules implemented by the employer in furtherance of the Act are not exercising any rights afforded by the Act. Disciplinary measures taken by employers solely in response to employee refusal to comply with appropriate safety rules and regulations, will not ordinarily be regarded as discriminatory action prohibited by section 11(c). This situation should be distinguished from refusals to work, as discussed in § 1977.12.

§ 1977.23 State plans.

A State which is implementing its own occupational safety and health enforcement program pursuant to section 18 of the Act and parts 1902 and 1952 of this chapter must have provisions as effective as those of section 11(c) to protect employees from discharge or discrimination. Such provisions do not divest either the Secretary of Labor or Federal district courts of jurisdiction over employee complaints of discrimination. However, the Secretary of Labor may refer complaints of employees adequately protected by State Plans' provisions to the appropriate state agency. The basic principles outlined in § 1977.18, *supra* will be observed

as to deferrals to findings of state agencies.

PART 1978—RULES FOR IMPLEMENTING SECTION 405 OF THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1982 (STAA)

Subpart A—Interpretive Rules [Reserved]

Subpart B—Rules of Procedure

COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS, FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY ORDERS

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MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

- 1978.112 Arbitration or other proceedings.
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- 1978.114 Statutory time periods.
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AUTHORITY: 29 U.S.C. 657(g)(2); 29 U.S.C. 660(c)(2); 49 U.S.C. 31101 and 31105; Secretary of Labor's Order No. 1-90, 55 FR 9033.

SOURCE: 53 FR 47681, Nov. 25, 1988, unless otherwise noted.

Subpart A—Interpretive Rules [Reserved]

Subpart B—Rules of Procedure

COMPLAINTS, INVESTIGATIONS, FINDINGS AND PRELIMINARY ORDERS

§ 1978.100 Purpose and scope.

(a) This subpart implements the procedural aspects of section 405 of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, 49 U.S.C. 2305, which provides

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for employee protection from discrimination because the employee has engaged in protected activity pertaining to commercial motor vehicle safety and health matters.

(b) Procedures are established by this subpart pursuant to the statutory provision set forth above for the expeditious handling of complaints of discrimination made by employees, or persons acting on their behalf. These rules, together with those rules set forth at 29 CFR part 18, set forth the procedures for submission of complaints under section 405, investigations, issuance of findings and preliminary orders, objections thereto, litigation before administrative law judges, post-hearing administrative review, withdrawals and settlements, judicial review and enforcement, and deferral to other forums.

§ 1978.101 Definitions.

(a) *Act* means the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (STAA) (49 U.S.C. 2301 *et seq.*).

(b) *Secretary* means Secretary of Labor or persons to whom authority under the Act has been delegated.

(c) *Assistant Secretary* means the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health or the person or persons to whom he or she delegates authority under the Act.

(d) *Employee* means (1) a driver of a commercial motor vehicle (including an independent contractor while in the course of personally operating a commercial motor vehicle); (2) a mechanic; (3) a freight handler; or (4) any individual other than an employer; who is employed by a commercial motor carrier and who in the course of his employment directly affects commercial motor vehicle safety, but such term does not include an employee of the United States, any State, or a political subdivision of a State who is acting within the course of such employment.

(e) *Commercial motor carrier* means a person who meets the definition of *motor carrier* found at 49 U.S.C. 10102(13) (Supp. 1987) and *motor private carrier* found at 49 U.S.C. 10102(16) (Supp. 1987).

(f) *OSHA* means the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

(g) *Complainant* means the employee who filed a section 405 complaint or on whose behalf a complaint was filed.

(h) *Named person* means the person alleged to have violated section 405.

(i) *Person* means one or more individuals, partnerships, associations, corporations, business trusts, legal representatives or any group of persons.

§ 1978.102 Filing of discrimination complaint.

(a) *Who may file.* An employee may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging a violation of section 405.

(b) *Nature of filing.* No particular form of complaint is required.

(c) *Place of filing.* The complaint should be filed with the OSHA Area Director responsible for enforcement activities in the geographical area where the employee resides or was employed, but filing with any OSHA officer or employee is sufficient. Addresses and telephone numbers for these officials are set forth in local directories.

(d) *Time for filing.* (1) Section 405(c)(1) provides that an employee who believes that he has been discriminated against in violation of section 405 (a) or (b) “* * * may, within one hundred and eighty days after such alleged violation occurs,” file or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf a complaint with the Secretary.

(2) A major purpose of the 180-day period in this provision is to allow the Secretary to decline to entertain complaints which have become stale. Accordingly, complaints not filed within 180 days of an alleged violation will ordinarily be considered to be untimely.

(3) However, there are circumstances which will justify tolling of the 180-day period on the basis of recognized equitable principles or because of extenuating circumstances, *e.g.*, where the employer has concealed or misled the employee regarding the grounds for discharge or other adverse action; or where the discrimination is in the nature of a continuing violation. The pendency of grievance-arbitration proceedings or filing with another agency are examples of circumstances which do not justify a tolling of the 180-day period. The Assistant Secretary will