

schedules covered by the report and the accounting principles and practices reflected therein; and

(B) The opinion of the accountant as to the consistency of the application of the accounting principles with the application of such principles in the preceding year or as to any changes in such principles which have a material effect on the financial statements.

(iv) *Exceptions.* Any matters to which the accountant takes exception shall be clearly identified, the exception thereto specifically and clearly stated, and, to the extent practicable, the effect of the matters to which the accountant takes exception on the related financial statements given. The matters to which the accountant takes exception shall be further identified as (A) those that are the result of DOL regulations, and (B) all others.

(c) *Contents of the annual report for plans with fewer than 100 participants.* Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section and in §§ 2520.104-43 and 2520.104a-6, the annual report of an employee benefit plan which covers fewer than 100 participants at the beginning of the plan year shall include a Form 5500 “Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan” and any statements or schedules required to be attached to the form, completed in accordance with the instructions for the form, including Schedule A (Insurance Information), Schedule B (Actuarial Information), Schedule D (DFE/Participating Plan Information), Schedule I (Financial Information—Small Plan), and Schedule R (Retirement Plan Information). See the instructions for this form.

(d) *Special rule.* If a plan has between 80 and 120 participants (inclusive) as of the beginning of the plan year, the plan administrator may elect to file the same category of annual report (i.e., the annual report for plans with 100 or more participants under paragraph (b) of this section or the annual report for plans with fewer than 100 participants under paragraph (c) of this section) that was filed for the previous plan year.

(e) *Plans which participate in a master trust.* The plan administrator of a plan which participates in a master trust shall file an annual report on Form

5500 in accordance with the instructions for the form relating to master trusts and master trust investment accounts. For purposes of annual reporting, a master trust is a trust for which a regulated financial institution serves as trustee or custodian (regardless of whether such institution exercises discretionary authority or control respecting the management of assets held in the trust) and in which assets of more than one plan sponsored by a single employer or by a group of employers under common control are held. For purpose of this paragraph, a regulated financial institution is a bank, trust company, or similar financial institution regulated, supervised, and subject to periodic examination by a State or Federal agency. Common control is determined on the basis of all relevant facts and circumstances (whether or not such employers are incorporated).

(f) *Electronic filing.* The Form 5500 “Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan” may be filed electronically or through other media in accordance with the instructions accompanying the form, provided the plan administrator maintains an original copy, with all required signatures, as part of the plan’s records.

[43 FR 10140, Mar. 10, 1978, as amended at 45 FR 51446, Aug. 1, 1980; 46 FR 61079, Dec. 15, 1981; 51 FR 41288, Nov. 13, 1986; 54 FR 8627, Mar. 1, 1989; 65 FR 21080, Apr. 19, 2000]

**§ 2520.103-2 Contents of the annual report for a group insurance arrangement.**

(a) *General.* (1) A trust or other entity described in § 2520.104-43(b) that files an annual report for purposes of § 2520.104-43 shall include in such report the items set forth in paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) [Reserved]

(b) *Contents.* (1) A Form 5500 “Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan” and any statements or schedules required to be attached to the form, completed in accordance with the instructions for the form, including Schedule A (Insurance Information), Schedule C (Service Provider Information), Schedule D (DFE/Participating Plan Information), Schedule G (Financial Transaction Schedules), Schedule

H (Financial Information), and the other financial schedules described in § 2520.103-10. See the instructions for this form.

(2) Separate financial statements (in addition to the information required by paragraph (b)(1) of this section), if such financial statements are prepared in order for the independent qualified public accountant to form the opinion required by section 103(a)(3)(A) of the Act and § 2520.103-2(b)(5). These financial statements shall include the following:

(i) A statement of all trust assets and liabilities at current value presented in comparative form for the beginning and end of the year. The statement of trust assets and liabilities shall include the assets and liabilities required to be reported on the Form 5500; however, the assets and liabilities may be aggregated into categories in a manner other than that used on Form 5500.

(ii) Separate or combined statements of all trust income and expenses and changes in net assets which includes the categories of income, expense, and changes in assets required to be reported on the Form 5500; however, the income, expense, and changes in assets may be aggregated into categories in a manner other than that used on Form 5500.

(3) Notes to the financial statements described in paragraph (b)(1) or (2) of this section which contain a description of the accounting principles and practices reflected in the financial statements and, if applicable, variances from generally accepted accounting principles; a description of the group insurance arrangement including any significant changes in the group insurance arrangement made during the period and the impact of such changes on benefits; a description of material lease commitments, other commitments, and contingent liabilities; a description of agreements and transactions with persons known to be parties in interest; a general description of priorities upon termination of the plan; an explanation of the differences, if any, between the information contained in the separate financial statements and the assets, liabilities, income, expenses and changes in net assets as required to be reported on the Form 5500; and

any other matters necessary to fully and fairly present the financial condition of the plan.

(4) In the case of a group insurance arrangement some or all of the assets of which are held in a pooled separate account maintained by an insurance carrier, or in a common or collective trust maintained by a bank, trust company or similar institution, a copy of the annual statement of assets and liabilities of such account or trust for the fiscal year of the account or trust which ends with or within the plan year for which the annual report is made as required to be furnished by such account or trust under § 2520.103-5(c). Although the statement of assets and liabilities referred to in § 2520.103-5(c) shall be considered part of the group insurance arrangement's annual report, such statement of assets and liabilities need not be filed with its annual report. See §§ 2520.103-3 and 2520.103-4 for reporting requirements for plans some or all of the assets of which are held in a pooled separate account maintained by an insurance company, or a common or collective trust maintained by a bank or similar institution, and see § 2520.104-43(b)(2) for when the terms "group insurance arrangement" or "trust or other entity" shall be, respectively, used in place of the terms "plan" and "plan administrator."

(5) A report of an independent qualified public accountant.

(i) *Technical requirements.* The accountant's report—

(A) Shall be dated;

(B) Shall be signed manually;

(C) Shall indicate the city and State where issued; and

(D) Shall identify without detailed enumeration the financial statements and schedules covered by the report.

(ii) *Representations as to the audit.* The accountant's report—

(A) Shall state whether the audit was made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards; and

(B) Shall designate any auditing procedures deemed necessary by the accountant under the circumstances of the particular case, which have been omitted, and the reasons for their omission. Authority for the omission of certain procedures which independent

accountants might ordinarily employ in the course of an audit made for the purpose of expressing the opinions required by paragraph (b)(5)(iii) of this section is contained in §2520.103-8.

(iii) *Opinion to be expressed.* The accountant's report shall state clearly:

(A) The opinion of the accountant in respect of the financial statements and schedules covered by the report and the accounting principles and practices reflected therein; and

(B) The opinion of the accountant as to the consistency of the application of the accounting principles with the application of such principles in the preceding year, or as to any changes in such principles which have a material effect on the financial statements.

(iv) *Exceptions.* Any matters to which the accountant takes exception shall be clearly identified, the exception thereto specifically and clearly stated, and, to the extent practicable, the effect of the matters to which the accountant takes exception on the related financial statements given. The matters to which the accountant takes exception shall be further identified as to (A) those that are the result of DOL regulations and (B) all others.

(c) *Electronic filing.* The Form 5500 "Annual Return/Report of Employee Benefit Plan" may be filed electronically or through other media in accordance with the instructions accompanying the form, provided the trust or other entity described in §2520.104-43(b) maintains an original copy, with all required signatures, as part of the trust's or entity's records.

[43 FR 10140, Mar. 10, 1978, as amended at 54 FR 8627, Mar. 1, 1989; 65 FR 21080, Apr. 19, 2000]

**§2520.103-3 Exemption from certain annual reporting requirements for assets held in a common or collective trust.**

(a) *General.* Under the authority of sections 103(b)(3)(G), 103(b)(4), 104(a)(2)(B), 104(a)(3), 110 and 505 of the Act, a plan whose assets are held in whole or in part in a common or collective trust maintained by a bank, trust company, or similar institution which meets the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section shall include as part of the annual report required to be

filed under §§2520.104a-5 or 2520.104a-6 the information described in paragraph (c) of this section. Such plan is not required to include in its annual report information concerning the individual transactions of the common or collective trust. This exemption has no application to assets not held in such trusts.

(b) *Application.* This provision applies only to a plan some or all of the assets of which are held in a common or collective trust maintained by a bank, trust company, or similar institution regulated and supervised and subject to periodic examination by a State or Federal agency. For purposes of this section,

(1) A common or collective trust is a trust which consists of the assets of two or more participating entities and is maintained for the collective investment and reinvestment of assets contributed thereto, and

(2) Plans maintained by a single employer or by the members of a controlled group of corporations, as defined in section 1563(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, shall be deemed to be a single participating entity.

(c) *Contents.* (1) A plan which meets the requirements of paragraph (b) of this section, and which invests in a common or collective trust that files a Form 5500 report in accordance with §2520.103-9, shall include in its annual report: information required by the instructions to Schedule H (Financial Information) or Schedule I (Financial Information—Small Plan) about the current value of and net investment gain or loss relating to the units of participation in the common or collective trust held by the plan; identifying information about the common or collective trust including its name, employer identification number, and any other information required by the instructions to the Schedule D (DFE/Participating Plan Information); and such other information as is required in the separate statements and schedules of the annual report about the value of the plan's units of participation in the common or collective trust and transactions involving the acquisition and disposition by the plan of units of participation in the common or collective trust.