

the hearing, an amendment shall be allowed only at the discretion of the Administrative law judge. When an amended pleading is filed, other parties may file a response and objection within 10 days.

(b) A party may withdraw his/her pleading only on approval of the administrative law judge or Assistant Administrator.

§ 386.52 Appeals from interlocutory rulings.

Rulings of the administrative law judge may not be appealed to the Assistant Administrator prior to his/her consideration of the entire proceeding except under exceptional circumstances and with the consent of the administrative law judge. In deciding whether to allow appeals, the administrative law judge shall determine whether the appeal is necessary to prevent undue prejudice to a party or to prevent substantial detriment to the public interest.

§ 386.53 Subpoenas, witness fees.

(a) Applications for the issuance of subpoenas must be submitted to the Assistant Administrator, or in cases that have been called for a hearing, to the administrative law judge. The application must show the general relevance and reasonable scope of the evidence sought. Any person served with a subpoena may, within 7 days after service, file a motion to quash or modify. The motion must be filed with the official who approved the subpoena. The filing of a motion shall stay the effect of the subpoena until a decision is reached.

(b) Witnesses shall be entitled to the same fees and mileage as are paid witnesses in the courts of the United States. The fees shall be paid by the party at whose instance the witness is subpoenaed or appears.

(c) Paragraph (a) of this section shall not apply to the Administrator or employees of the FMCSA or to the production of documents in their custody. Applications for the attendance of such persons or the production of such documents at a hearing shall be made to the Assistant Administrator or administrative law judge, if one is appointed,

and shall set forth the need for such evidence and its relevancy.

§ 386.54 Administrative law judge.

(a) *Appointment.* After the matter is called for hearing, the Assistant Administrator shall appoint an administrative law judge.

(b) *Power and duties.* The administrative law judge has power to take any action and to make all needful rules and regulations to govern the conduct of the proceedings to ensure a fair and impartial hearing, and to avoid delay in the disposition of the proceedings. The powers of the administrative law judge include the following:

(1) To administer oaths and affirmations;

(2) To issue orders permitting inspection and examination of lands, buildings, equipment, and any other physical thing and the copying of any document;

(3) To issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and the production of evidence as authorized by law;

(4) To rule on offers of proof and receive evidence;

(5) To regulate the course of the hearing and the conduct of participants in it;

(6) To consider and rule upon all procedural and other motions, including motions to dismiss, except motions which, under this part, are made directly to the Assistant Administrator;

(7) To hold conferences for settlement, simplification of issues, or any other proper purpose;

(8) To make and file decisions; and

(9) To take any other action authorized by these rules and permitted by law.

[50 FR 40306, Oct. 2, 1985, as amended at 53 FR 2036, Jan. 26, 1988; 66 FR 49872, Oct. 1, 2001]

§ 386.55 Prehearing conferences.

(a) *Convening.* At any time before the hearing begins, the administrative law judge, on his/her own motion or on motion by a party, may direct the parties or their counsel to participate with him/her in a prehearing conference to consider the following:

(1) Simplification and clarification of the issues;

(2) Necessity or desirability of amending pleadings;