

## § 1980.102

*Company representative* means any officer, employee, contractor, subcontractor, or agent of a company.

*Complainant* means the employee who filed a complaint under the Act or on whose behalf a complaint was filed.

*Employee* means an individual presently or formerly working for a company or company representative, an individual applying to work for a company or company representative, or an individual whose employment could be affected by a company or company representative.

*Named person* means the employer and/or the company or company representative named in the complaint who is alleged to have violated the Act.

*OSHA* means the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the United States Department of Labor.

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

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

### § 1980.102 Obligations and prohibited acts.

(a) No company or company representative may discharge, demote, suspend, threaten, harass or in any other manner discriminate against any employee with respect to the employee's compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because the employee, or any person acting pursuant to the employee's request, has engaged in any of the activities specified in paragraphs (b)(1) and (2) of this section.

(b) An employee is protected against discrimination (as described in paragraph (a) of this section) by a company or company representative for any lawful act:

(1) To provide information, cause information to be provided, or otherwise assist in an investigation regarding any conduct which the employee reasonably believes constitutes a violation of 18 U.S.C. 1341, 1343, 1344, or 1348, any rule or regulation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or any provision of Federal law relating to fraud against shareholders, when the infor-

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mation or assistance is provided to or the investigation is conducted by—

(i) A Federal regulatory or law enforcement agency;

(ii) Any Member of Congress or any committee of Congress; or

(ii) A person with supervisory authority over the employee (or such other person working for the employer who has the authority to investigate, discover, or terminate misconduct); or

(2) To file, cause to be filed, testify, participate in, or otherwise assist in a proceeding filed or about to be filed (with any knowledge of the employer) relating to an alleged violation of 18 U.S.C. 1341, 1343, 1344, or 1348, any rule or regulation of the Securities and Exchange Commission, or any provision of Federal law relating to fraud against shareholders.

### § 1980.103 Filing of discrimination complaint.

(a) *Who may file.* An employee who believes that he or she has been discriminated against by a company or company representative in violation of the Act may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a complaint alleging such discrimination.

(b) *Nature of filing.* No particular form of complaint is required, except that a complaint must be in writing and should include a full statement of the acts and omissions, with pertinent dates, which are believed to constitute the violations.

(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 may be filed with any OSHA officer or employee. Addresses and telephone numbers for these officials are set forth in local directories and at the following Internet address: <http://www.osha.gov>.

(d) *Time for filing.* Within 90 days after an alleged violation of the Act occurs (*i.e.*, when the discriminatory decision has been both made and communicated to the complainant), an employee who believes that he or she has been discriminated against in violation of the Act may file, or have filed by any person on the employee's behalf, a

complaint alleging such discrimination. The date of the postmark, facsimile transmittal, or e-mail communication will be considered to be the date of filing; if the complaint is filed in person, by hand-delivery or other means, the complaint is filed upon receipt.

**§ 1980.104 Investigation.**

(a) Upon receipt of a complaint in the investigating office, the Assistant Secretary will notify the named person (or named persons) of the filing of the complaint, of the allegations contained in the complaint, and of the substance of the evidence supporting the complaint (redacted to protect the identity of any confidential informants). The Assistant Secretary also will notify the named person of its right under paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section and paragraph (e) of § 1980.110. A copy of the notice to the named person will also be provided to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

(b) A complaint of alleged violation shall be dismissed unless the complainant has made a *prima facie* showing that protected behavior or conduct was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action alleged in the complaint.

(1) The complaint, supplemented as appropriate by interviews of the complainant, must allege the existence of facts and evidence to make a *prima facie* showing as follows:

- (i) The employee engaged in a protected activity or conduct;
- (ii) The named person knew or suspected, actually or constructively, that the employee engaged in the protected activity;
- (iii) The employee suffered an unfavorable personnel action; and
- (iv) The circumstances were sufficient to raise the inference that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the unfavorable action.

(2) For purposes of determining whether to investigate, the complainant will be considered to have met the required burden if the complaint on its face, supplemented as appropriate through interviews of the complainant, alleges the existence of facts and either direct or circumstantial evidence to meet the required showing, *i.e.*, to give

rise to an inference that the named person knew or suspected that the employee engaged in protected activity and that the protected activity was a contributing factor in the unfavorable personnel action. Normally the burden is satisfied, for example, if the complaint shows that the adverse personnel action took place shortly after the protected activity, giving rise to the inference that it was a factor in the adverse action. If the required showing has not been made, the complainant will be so advised and the investigation will not commence.

(c) Notwithstanding a finding that a complainant has made a *prima facie* showing, as required by this section, an investigation of the complaint shall not be conducted if the named person, pursuant to the procedures provided in this paragraph, demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of the complainant's protected behavior or conduct. Within 20 days of receipt of the notice of the filing of the complaint, the named person may submit to the Assistant Secretary a written statement and any affidavits or documents substantiating its position. Within the same 20 days, the named person may request a meeting with the Assistant Secretary to present its position.

(d) If the named person fails to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that it would have taken the same unfavorable personnel action in the absence of the behavior protected by the Act, the Assistant Secretary will conduct an investigation. Investigations will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of any person who provides information on a confidential basis, other than the complainant, in accordance with part 70 of this title.

(e) Prior to the issuance of findings and a preliminary order as provided for in § 1980.105, if the Assistant Secretary has reasonable cause, on the basis of information gathered under the procedures of this part, to believe that the named person has violated the Act and that preliminary reinstatement is warranted, the Assistant Secretary will again contact the named person to give