

§ 672.20

§ 672.20 Initial decision.

(a) *Filing and contents.* The Presiding Officer shall issue and file with the Hearing Clerk an initial decision as soon as practicable after the period for filing reply briefs, if any, has expired. The initial decision shall contain findings of fact, conclusions regarding all material issues of law or discretion, the reasons for the findings and conclusions, a recommended civil penalty assessment or other sanction, if appropriate, and a proposed final order. Upon receipt of an initial decision, the Hearing Clerk shall forward a copy to all parties, and shall send the original, along with the record of the proceeding, to the Director.

(b) *Amount of civil penalty.* If the Presiding Officer determines that a violation has occurred, he shall set the dollar amount of the recommended civil penalty in the initial decision in accordance with any criteria set forth in the Act, and must consider any civil penalty guidelines issued by NSF. If the Presiding Officer decides to assess a penalty different in amount from the penalty recommended in the complaint, he shall set forth in the initial decision the specific reasons for the increase or decrease. The Presiding Officer shall not raise a penalty from that recommended in the complaint if the respondent has defaulted.

(c) *Effect of initial decision.* The initial decision of the Presiding Officer shall become the final order of the Agency within forty-five (45) days after its service upon the parties and without further proceedings unless (1) an appeal to the Director is filed by a party to the proceedings; or (2) the Director elects, sua sponte, to review the initial decision.

(d) *Motion to reopen a hearing.* A motion to reopen a hearing to take further evidence must be made no later than twenty (20) days after service of the initial decision on the parties and shall (1) state the specific grounds upon which relief is sought; (2) state briefly the nature and purpose of the evidence to be adduced; (3) show that such evidence is not cumulative; and (4) show good cause why such evidence was not adduced at the hearing. The motion shall be made to the Presiding Officer and filed with the Hearing Clerk. Par-

45 CFR Ch. VI (10-1-05 Edition)

ties shall have ten (10) days following service to respond. The Presiding Officer shall grant or deny such motion as soon as practicable. The conduct of any proceeding which may be required as a result of the granting of any motion to reopen shall be governed by the provisions of the applicable sections of these rules. The filing of a motion to reopen a hearing shall automatically stay the running of all time periods specified under these Rules until such time as the motion is denied or the reopened hearing is concluded.

§ 672.21 Appeal from or review of interlocutory orders or rulings.

(a) *Request for interlocutory orders or rulings.* Except as provided in this section, appeals to the Director or, upon delegation, to the General Counsel, shall obtain as a matter of right only from a default order, an accelerated decision or decision to dismiss, or an initial decision rendered after an evidentiary hearing. Appeals from other orders or rulings shall lie only if the Presiding Officer, upon motion of a party, certifies such orders or rulings to the Director on appeal. Requests for such certification shall be filed in writing within six (6) days of notice of the ruling or service of the order, and shall state briefly the grounds to be relied upon on appeal.

(b) *Availability of interlocutory appeal.* The Presiding Officer may certify any ruling for appeal to the Director when (1) the order or ruling involves an important question of law or policy and there is substantial grounds for difference of opinion; and (2) either (i) an immediate appeal from the order or ruling will materially advance the ultimate resolution of the proceeding, or (ii) review after the final order is issued will be inadequate or ineffective.

(c) *Decision.* If the Director or the General Counsel takes no action within thirty (30) days of the certification, the appeal is dismissed. If the Director or the General Counsel decides to hear the interlocutory appeal, he shall make and transmit his findings and conclusions to the Presiding Officer. When the Presiding Officer declines to certify an order or ruling to the Director on